VISHNU ON FREUD'S DESK

A Reader in Psychoanalysis and Hinduism

edited by

T.G. VAIDYANATHAN

&

JEFFREY J. KRIPAL

SHOUT
SHARE
IT

In 1931, Freud wrote a letter of thanks for an ivory statuette of Vishnu: 'I gave it a place of honour on my desk. As long as I can enjoy life it will recall to my mind the progress of psychoanalysis, the proud conquest it has made in foreign countries...' The occasion was his seventy-fifth birthday and the gift was sent by none other than Girindrasekhar Bose, the father of psychoanalysis in India.

Vishnu on Freud's Desk traces some of the colonial, postcolonial and postmodern complexities of psychoanalytic thought as it has been variously applied to Hinduism. From Bose's pioneering reflections on the Indian Oedipal wish to postcolonial cultural criticism and contemporary clinical case studies, the collection spans close to a century of creative, sometimes radical, and always controversial thought about the psychological and theoretical riches of Hinduism.

With a foreword by Sudhir Kakar, this volume includes both classical and new essays by: William B. Parsons, Christiane Hartnack, A.K. Ramanujan, Paul Courtright, Gananath Obeyesekere, G.M. Carstairs, Stanley Kurtz, Sudhir Kakar, J.M. Masson, Robert Goldman, Wendy Doniger, Ashis Nandy, Sarah Caldwell, Alfred Collins and Prakash Desai, Alan Roland, and B.K. Ramanujam.

For all those interested in psychoanalytic theory, in contemporary cultural theory, and in Hindu thought, this is an invaluable sourcebook, full of insights into the workings of the Indian—and the western—psyche.

Vishnu on Freud's Desk

Statuette of Vishnu, ivory on mahogany base, presented to Freud by Girindrasekhar Bose. Courtesy Freud Museum, London.

Vishnu on Freud's Desk

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T.G. Vaidyanathan
and
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To

Girindrasekhar Bose

(1886 – 1953)

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Foreword

This book is a most welcome effort to illuminate the various facets of the psychoanalytic encounter with Hindu India. The encounter itself has been sometimes fractitious and not always free of misunderstandings. Psychoanalysis, after all, is an iconoclastic discipline *par excellence*, especially wary of our most cherished beliefs and the unexamined convictions we carry with us from our cultural and individual pasts. It cannot help but grate on a sensibility excessively influenced by the Hindu idealistic tradition with its glorification of 'the past'.

This collection of essays seeks to present the best examples of psychoanalytic engagement with Hindu cultural and social phenomena and thought carried out by scholars from diverse fields. It amply demonstrates the high order of intellectual creativity unleashed by the encounter between psychoanalysis and Hinduism which not only illuminates aspects of the latter but, reflexively, questions some assumptions and models of psychoanalysis itself. It is to the credit of the editors that their selection has achieved an optimal balance between the historical and the contemporary aspects of the encounter and between the theoretical, the discursive as well as the clinical, narrative modes in which this engagement has been carried out. The general reader will find himself or herself reacting with enthusiasm, consternation, with 'Ah-ha's' of insight and groans of violent disagreement, but I am certain of one thing — the reader will find these essays unfailingly interesting.

SUDHIR KAKAR

Introduction

T.G. Vaidyanathan

Even by the time Freud wrote *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (published in the fall of 1920, but the first draft of the essay was ready by the early spring of 1919), he knew enough about India to admit — albeit, with a little hesitation — in a footnote buried near the very end of that book to a possible Indian source for the Platonic myth of the origin of sexuality depicted in *The Symposium*. The rather longish footnote (added, clearly as an anxious afterthought, a whole year later in 1921!) begins by formally thanking Heinrich Gomperz (the son of the noted Greek scholar, Theodor Gomperz) for 'the following discussion on the origin of the Platonic myth'. It continues:

> It is to be remarked that what is essentially the same theory is already to be found in the Upanishads. For we find the following passage in the *Brihadâranyaka-upanishad*, 1, 4, 3 [Max Müller's translation, 285f.], where the origin of the world from the Atman (the Self or Ego) is described: 'But he felt no delight. Therefore a man who is lonely feels no delight. He wished for a second. He was so large as man and wife together. He then made this his Self to fall in two, and then arose husband and wife. Therefore Yagnavalkya said: We two are thus (each of us) like half a shell.' Therefore the void which was there, is filled by the wife.

Freud's own gloss on the passage just quoted is highly revealing of his great respect for India and its lofty philosophical traditions. The footnote continues:

> The *Brihadâranyaka-upanishad* is the most ancient of all the Upanishads and no competent authority dates it later than the year

> 800 BC. In contradiction to the prevailing opinion, I should hesitate to give an unqualified denial of Plato's myth being derived, even if it were only indirectly, from the Indian source, since a similar possibility cannot be excluded in the case of the doctrine of transmigration. (Sigmund Freud, *On Metapsychology: The Theory of Psychoanalysis*).

The influence of Indian philosophy (in this instance, not Hindu, but Buddhist) even on Freud's own thinking is now beyond dispute. The notorious 'death instinct' (*thanatos*) turns out to be none other than the *nirvana* of Buddhist ancestry (ibid., 329; see also footnote on the same page). Ten years later, in 1930, when Freud met the Japanese psychologist Yaekichi Yabe 'one late evening', on 7 May, and the talk turned to *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (which was among the earliest of Freud's works to appear in a Japanese translation), Yabe spoke of the affinities between *thanatos* and the Buddhist notion of *nirvana*. Freud, it seems, was 'so struck by this comment that he called Anna from the next room to come and hear these words' (cited in the 'Introduction' to *The Diary of Sigmund Freud 1929–1939: A Record of the Final Decade*). Increasingly, it seems, Freud was, in his last years, drawn to the Orient (as witness the strange medley of Oriental antiquities that fairly crowd his desk — see front cover, inset), and his growing correspondence with that ardent India enthusiast, Romain Rolland, during the same period merely serves to confirm this impression. But, alas, India remains the least favoured destination for Freud's biographers even now. To take the latest of these tireless Boswells for whom nothing pertaining to Freud is too trivial, Peter Gay, it is surprising that neither in the 651-page text nor in the closely printed 37-page bibliographical essay at the end of his otherwise meticulously researched biography of Freud, published as recently as 1988 — nearly a half century after Freud's death in 1939 — is there a single mention of India, not to speak of any Indian practitioner! But we know that Girindrasekhar Bose, founder no less of the Indian Psychoanalytical Society, had already started a correspondence with Freud, over sixty years back, which was carried on for well over two decades (*Freud–Bose Correspondence*). Indeed, on 6 May 1931, Bose sent Freud by 'insured parcel' an ivory statuette of the god Vishnu (Vishnu Ananta Deva) modelled on an ancient stone statue in Travancore (Kerala of today — nearly 2000 miles from Calcutta where Bose practised) on the occasion of his

seventy-fifth birthday. Freud acknowledged receipt of the gift most gratefully: 'The Statuette is charming', he wrote in reply on 31 December 1931, 'I gave it the place of honour on my desk. As long as I can enjoy life it will recall to my mind the progress of Psychoanalysis[,] the proud conquests it has made in foreign countries and the kind feelings for me it has aroused in some of my contemporaries at least.' Later, when the wood and ivory miniature developed cracks, he mused, 'Can the god, being used to Calcutta, not stand the climate in Vienna?' The cobra-headed ivory Vishnu took its place among Freud's collection of Greek, Roman and Egyptian statues at his house at Bergasse 19.

Bose has, in fact, serious claims to be regarded as one of the early pioneers of the discipline of psychoanalysis after Freud's pathbreaking discovery of the unconscious in the 1890s. For Bose had already begun by 1909 (see Christine Hartnack's essay 'Vishnu on Freud's Desk: Psychoanalysis in Colonial India' to follow in Part Two, Chapter 3) to treat patients 'with a technique closely akin', as he says, to Freud's original method. Indeed, when Bose sent his doctoral dissertation *The Concept of Repression* (reviewed by no less than Ernest Jones himself in the *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* in 1921) to Freud, the Viennese psychologist was pleasantly surprised that 'someone from India should display so good a knowledge of psychoanalysis' (*Freud–Bose Correspondence*, p. 2). In his letter to Bose, on 29 May 1921, he not only acknowledged the receipt of the book but even added that he was 'glad to testify [to] the correctness of its principal views and the good sense appearing in it' (ibid). Yet, Bose was by no means a blind follower of Freud. He was too deeply rooted in Hindu spiritual and philosophical lore for that, having already by then published a translation of Patanjali's *Yogasutras*. He differed, too, from Freud on some of the basic cultural assumptions of psychoanalysis. In fact, he found no evidence of castration fears among Indian patients and drew attention to the tendency that 'the desire to be female is more easily unearthed in Indian male patients than in European' (Bose's numerous case histories and essays — still uncollected — are full of examples of this wish among Indian men, and consequently he found no evidence at all of the Freudian notion of 'penis envy'!) and thus laid the foundation for a truly Indian psychoanalytical understanding of the Hindu modal personality. It is against this background that

we must seek to understand his basic *weltanschauung*: the theory of opposite wishes. Bose did not perceive the individual

> as essentially isolated from other individuals . . . but as potentially united with other human beings, animals, plants and nature. This essential bond as part of a unity between subject and object makes it possible for the patients to identify with the object of their wishes, that is to imagine what it is like to be hit [sic], or to be of the opposite gender (Hartnack, 'Vishnu on Freud's Desk', p. 87).

This propensity 'to imagine what it is like . . . to be of the opposite gender' among Indian men, aided by the absence of castration fears, led Bose to other serious differences with Freud. Not surprisingly, then, it is on the key issue of the castration threat that Bose departs radically from Freud. In an essay at the beginning of this Reader, he writes: 'The superego must be conquered and the ability to castrate the father and make him into a woman is an essential requisite for the adjustment of the oedipus wish. The oedipus is resolved not by the threat of castration but by the ability to castrate' (G. Bose, p. 33). Significantly, these dissenting ideas of Bose about the resolution of the Oedipus examples were formulated (as Hartnack points out in her essay) in the wake of the Indian non-cooperation movement against British India. In fact, the members of the Indian Psychoanalytical Society even discussed a paper by Owen Berkeley-Hill — one of the leading lights of the movement who practised at Ranchi in the state of Bihar — with Mahatma Gandhi himself! Berkeley-Hill argued that since the core of the problem between Hindus and Muslims is the sacred cow — which the Muslims slaughtered and ate — any reconciliation between them would demand 'as a cardinal feature some form of ceremonial in which cows would be killed and eaten, either actually or symbolically, by Hindus and Muslims in conclave' (Hartnack, p. 92).

At the same time that Bose was corresponding with Freud, yet another correspondent of Freud's was that remarkable Frenchman, Romain Rolland. During the inter-war years he was to write the biographies of three of India's greatest sons: Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekanand and Mahatma Gandhi. Bill Parsons in his essay 'Freud's Encounter with Hinduism: A Historical-Textual Overview' (an extract from his forthcoming book, *The Enigma of the Oceanic Feeling*) has argued that 'psychoanalysis

is an ethnoscience', a fact no better illustrated than in Freud's encounter with Hinduism in the shape of two European enthusiasts, Bruno Goetz and Romain Rolland. Around 1905, when Freud was nearing fifty, the young Swiss poet, Bruno Goetz — then a student at the University of Vienna — came to consult him for headaches that no remedy could alleviate. Goetz had been fascinated by the lectures on the *Bhagavad Gita* by the Sanskrit scholar, Leopold von Schroeder, but, on being told this, Freud sounded an admonitory note. Still, the extract that Parsons quotes from the so-called 'Goetz Letters' (which, Goetz claimed, contained 'verbatim, although in a fragmentary form, statements made by Freud') sounds far too good to be true when we consider Freud's generally sceptical attitude to religious claims. In fact, Parsons himself appears to doubt Goetz's 'integrity'! Romain Rolland fares somewhat better, although when the French Nobel laureate sent him his 3-volume biography of the Hindu saints, Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekanand, in January 1930, Freud's immediate reaction was 'I shall now try with your guidance to penetrate into the Indian jungle. . . .' We know from his remarks on the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* (quoted earlier) that Freud was highly respectful of ancient Hindu thought. And so this gut reaction on receiving Rolland's books on Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekanand can only be construed in the context of Freud's lifelong hostility to religion, both ancient and modern. Rather more sympathetic is Freud's famous 'Open Letter' to Rolland in 1936 on his visit to the Acropolis, where he seems to have had some sort of 'mystical experience'. Parsons devotes a good deal of space to this only to agree with Freud that the visit was probably prompted by 'the wish to overcome the father'. At the end of Parsons' essay, then, we must note that, for Freud, the chasm between psychoanalysis and religion yawns as wide as ever.

Psychoanalytic discussions about Hindu India often flounder around the core Freudian notion of the Oedipus complex. In my essay in *Daedalus* (Fall 1989), I had somewhat airily dismissed the relevance of the concept in understanding Hindu India. It was only in the course of a visit to the US in 1992–3, facilitated by a grant from the Ford Foundation, when I met Robert Goldman at Berkeley, that I began to revise my opinion. This occurred especially after reading his path-breaking essay, 'Fathers,

Sons, and Gurus: Oedipal Conflict in the Sanskrit Epics' (*Journal of Indian Philosophy* 6, 1978: 325–92) — which could not, regrettably, be included in the present collection due to constraints of space.

However, we have here a discussion of some of the key notions of the Goldman paper in Gananath Obeyesekere's essay, taken from his magisterial *The Work of Culture* (which Goldman himself had recommended to me on that visit) in the belief that it would, along with A.K. Ramanujan's paper in the same section, stimulate further interest in the 'Indian Oedipus'. Obeyesekere's paper is valuable in yet another way, for he speculates on what the Freudian position might have been if he had worked with Indian patients and been 'confronted with myths dealing with filicide and symbiosis with the mother'. This is due to a 'constitutional bisexuality' among Indians, he argues, incidentally reinforcing Bose's pioneering insight which we have already referred to, which produces, in addition, *pace* Freud himself, 'an effeminate feminine attitude to the father and a corresponding jealousy and hostility to the mother' (Gananath Obeyesekere, 'The Indian Oedipus Revisited', p. 158). We could be in Bose territory as well, and latterly, of Sudhir Kakar of whose cognate position more later. It also testifies to the degree to which the Freudian position is essentially compatible with present-day 'psychological anthropology'.

The late A.K. Ramanujan's essay, 'The Indian Oedipus', is not only of historical value (the version reproduced in our collection is a revised and enlarged version of an earlier paper in 1972) but, being something of a response to Goldman's seminal paper on oedipal conflict in the great Sanskrit epics referred to earlier, leads quietly to the large and important question of 'psychoanalytic universals'. Ramanujan mentions in passing that in India there is less repression of 'the wish to be female' than is found in Western culture and religion, and this once again leads us back to the now familiar Bose–Kakar position on the 'maternal feminine'.

Paul Courtright's classic vignette on the origins of the Ganesa myth, taken from his full length book, *Ganesa* — described even by the exacting Kurtz as 'an important and wise study' — forms part of this section on 'The Indian Oedipus'. We do hope that the present section will lead the reader into exploring the subject

further, since Ramanujan's paper fortunately carries a very exhaustive bibliography.

Section Four is rather more theoretical, beginning with a selection ('Hindu Personality Formation') from G.M. Carstairs' pioneering work in 1957, *The Twice-Born: A Study of a Community of High Caste Hindus.* Following through on Melanie Klein's insight on the 'split mother image' — one radically benign and the other just as radically malignant — Carstairs reads the Hindu Mother Goddess, both in her benevolent and devouring, bloodthirsty aspects, as an unresolved split persisting from childhood into adult life. Carstairs is probably also the first psychologist to suggest that the outcome of the oedipal situation for the Hindu male — paranoid reactions — leads to homosexual love for the father. Contrasting the Western ideal of emotional maturity (which is, among other things, '[the] ability to have a mutually rewarding experience of intercourse with a love partner of the opposite sex') with the Hindu goal of the 'final triumph of asceticism', because 'in the Hindu world, sexuality is considered an impediment to the progress towards emotional maturity', Carstairs can only see these differences psychoanalytically as leading inexorably to either 'homosexuality or impotence'. Despite the logic of these judgements on Hindu culture which 'pathologise' India, Carstairs is nonetheless constrained to 'pay a tribute to the serenity and calm which prevail in a well adjusted Hindu family' and to what he calls 'a gracious and civilised way of life'. Surely a bewildering paradox calling for, perhaps, what Stanley Kurtz has called 'a cultural reshaping of psychoanalysis'.

Stanley Kurtz's essay on child rearing, 'Psychoanalytic Approaches to Hindu Child Rearing: A Critique' (from his important book, *All the Mothers Are One*) is extremely valuable on two accounts: it offers a systematic and sustained critique of earlier psychoanalytical accounts, and it seeks to break the hegemony of individualistic bipolar models (highlighting the mother–son interaction to the exclusion of other family members) by suggesting his own 'caretaker' model of child rearing, which avoids some of the pitfalls of the classical psychoanalytical model. Kurtz subjects Carstairs' account of Hindu child rearing — on which subsequent accounts have been by and large based — to a searing critique by bringing out the psychological individualism implicit in it. Kakar's position too (as given in *The Inner World*) is similarly

faulted. Quoting the well-known passage where Kakar talks of Indians having 'more troops at the narcissistic position' than Westerners, Kurtz concludes that this will result in 'pathology among Indians' because Kakar is basically leg-roped to the overall Freudian framework. What Kurtz might have to say about Kakar's present position (see the extract which follows) — where Kakar elaborates on a mature individuality 'embedded and expressed in terms from the Hindu cultural universe' — is harder to fathom. Likewise, he falls foul of Alan Roland, after going some way with him, for resorting to the notion of 'mirroring', which Kurtz finds completely absent in Hindu child rearing. But something analogous to 'mirroring' is clearly present in *guru-shishya* relationships in the highly charged Indian phenomenon of *darshan*. Surprisingly, this ubiquitous 'guru' figure is conspicuous by his absence in Kurtz's account of Hindu India.

The final selection in this section is from Sudhir Kakar whose essay 'Clinical Work and Cultural Imagination' (from his recently published *Culture and Psyche*) strenuously asserts psychoanalytic universalism and offers, in passing, a critique of both Kurtz and Roland by pointing out that their positions, by implication, 'pathologise' India (ironically, this is precisely Kurtz's own charge against the Kakar of *The Inner World*!). Kakar points out that Indian 'individuation' does take place, though the form in which it takes place is to be understood in religious rather than psychological terms and hence must not be construed in the customary Western post-Enlightenment terms. Kakar's is a bold and determined effort to preserve the status of psychoanalysis as a universal discipline while safeguarding the essential specifics of Indian culture. (He has, nevertheless, been criticized for precisely this, for treading the line between cultural relativism and psychoanalytical universalism without attempting to resolve the tension between them.) Kakar's essay is embellished with two culturally revealing case histories: that of the 51-year old grocery shop owner, Ramnath, with 'an unspecified "fearfulness"' and the 45-year old journalist, Pran, with also 'a general unspecified anxiety'. While the case of Pran given here is yet another illustration of the hegemonic 'maternal-feminine' theme that Kakar has elaborated on in several earlier studies, the Ramnath profile (which Kakar disarmingly counts among his failures) appears more recent. Ramnath, according to Kakar, is an 'individual',

despite being traditional and lacking the trappings of psychological modernity, but since Kakar does not give any details of his family constellation it is difficult to arrive at any definite psychoanalytical conclusions on the basis of this case history. In fact, Kakar himself observes in the course of his remarks on Ramnath, that 'it is culture rather than psyche which is the focus of this presentation'. But, then, culture for Kakar is an 'early' rather than a 'late' entrant (as it is for more orthodox Freudians) in the formation of the superego.

Our longest section in the volume, 'Psychoanalytic Approaches to Mysticism, Myth and Ritual', opens with the controversial but always fascinating J.M. Masson, at his benign best in 'Sex and Yoga: Psychoanalysis and the Indian Religious Experience'. Masson probably makes the best case that I have read for the application of psychoanalysis to problematic areas of human experience, like yoga. He quotes an intriguing letter of Freud himself to a Swiss pastor-analyst, the Revd. Oscar Pfister (to whom Parsons had made a passing reference), where Freud lists the essential 'requirements' of an analyst:

> Your analyst suffers from the hereditary weakness of virtue. It is the work of an overdecent man who feels obliged to be discreet . . . discretion is incompatible with . . . psychoanalysis. One has to become a bad fellow, transcend the rules, sacrifice oneself, betray, and behave like an artist who buys paints with his wife's household money or burns the furniture to warm the room for his model. Without some such criminality, there is no real achievement (Masson, Chapter 10).

This high valorization of psychoanalysis by no less than the founder himself — with all its attendant risks — needs to be read, keeping in mind the growing need for a rapprochement between psychoanalysis and Hinduism, alongside Indian mystic, Sri Aurobindo's (Masson does make a reference to 'Aurobindo and his "Mother"') slighting references to psychoanalysis in his letters to disciples:

> I find it difficult to take these psychoanalysts at all seriously when they try to scrutinise spiritual experience by the flicker of their torch-lights, yet perhaps one ought to, for half-knowledge is a powerful thing and can be a great obstacle to the coming in front of the true Truth. This new psychology looks to me very much like children learning some summary and not very adequate alphabet. . . . They

> look from down up and explain the higher lights by the lower obscurities. . . . The superconscient, not the subconscient, is the true foundation of things. The significance of the lotus is not to be found by analysing the secrets of the mud from which it grows . . . its secret is to be found in the heavenly archetype of the lotus that blooms for ever in the Light above (Aurobindo).

Seemingly irreconcilable as the positions of the analyst and mystic appear, we need not despair. Not if we go by the flurry of quotations that bring to a close Masson's essay — Masson who, chameleon-like, has moved from Indology to psychoanalysis to his current preoccupation with whether elephants have feelings! He closes his essay with a few lines of Sanskrit verse (from an unaccredited source) which he himself translates as: 'Give up right and wrong. Truth and falsity. And when you have given all this up, give up that through which you gave it all up.' This seems nearer the mystic's position than the analyst's. Only the citer, if not the imaginary speaker in the quoted verse, is closer to an analyst than a mystic!

Goldman — to whom I have already indicated the extent of my intellectual indebtedness — is here represented by his truly insightful essay, 'Karma, Guilt, and Buried Memories: Public Fantasy and Private Reality in Traditional India'. Goldman demystifies the hoary Indian notion of *karma* (with its attendant doctrine of rebirth) by repositioning its core sense — we reap what we sow — and the psychological functions it serves as one of the 'universals of human culture'. In other words, people cherish such beliefs as *karma* 'not because they are ignorant or unenlightened, but because the belief in something unreal satisfies some real, compelling, and shared need'. How do events in our real, as opposed to imaginary, pasts, asks Goldman, affect our later lives? The issue of childhood memory, he argues, is like the closely linked issue of oedipal aggression, represented in disguised and fictive form. He chooses well-known episodes both in the Sanskrit epics but also in literary texts, like Kalidas's *Shakuntala*, to show 'that the traditional concept of *karma* and the memory of previous lives is similar to and in fact derived from the sense that all of us have of the loss or suppression of memories and emotions belonging to earlier periods of our actual lives'. Connecting these memories and emotions to 'oedipally aggressive actions' in past lives, Goldman argues that the notion of

karma is 'a psychotherapeutic device to aid . . . people in grappling with some of the more painful and intransigent problems of human life'. He concludes on the urgent need for 'humanists interested in the problems of human culture to examine . . . the belief in phenomenon such as *karma* with an eye turned out not so much towards metaphysics and philosophy as towards their real — i.e. their human — dimension'.

Wendy Doniger's fascinating essay 'When a Lingam is Just a Good Cigar: Psychoanalysis and Hindu Sexual Fantasies' puts forward the idea that it is the ancient Hindu text, the *Vishnu Purana*, rather than Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* that provides the best example of suppressed oedipal longings. Her argument is that: 'Sophocles' Oedipus myth is not the best example of suppressed oedipal longings; it accounts only for self-deception'. She argues that the Hindu story of the son of Krishna and the demon's wife is a much more convincing example of wish-fulfilment. This should put at rest beliefs that notions like the Oedipus complex — surely the cornerstone of Freudian psychoanalysis — are to be found only in Western societies and are inapplicable to Oriental societies. This should also strengthen the claims of theorists, like Alan Roland, who seek to universalize the presence of the Oedipus complex.

Ashis Nandy's penetrating study 'Sati: A Nineteenth Century Tale of Women, Violence and Protest' seeks to apply psychoanalytic insights to the age-old custom of 'Sati' and, in doing so, is able to show indirectly that its abolition coincided with the rising self-confidence of the British colonial raj. In a footnote to his essay, he observes: 'To initiate a search for the roots of his [Rammohan Roy's] reformism in his personal life is also therefore an attempt to locate the major psychological needs behind the social forces which might have powered the rite and then rendered it anachronistic.' This 'search' leads Nandy to note 'the tendency in an extended family to expose the growing child to a number of adult authorities and discourage him from distinguishing between "near" and "distant" relations among these authorities. The aim is to deter the growth of "emotionally exclusive" loyalty towards one's own nuclear unit within the larger family'. After coming close to a position that Kurtz is to elaborate later — the notion of multiple caretakers — Nandy returns to a position already sketched by Carstairs of the mother

as 'an unpredictable nurturant, prone to betray and eager to aggress'. Still the value of Nandy's essay is that, apart from Hartnack's essay linking psychoanalysis and colonialism, Nandy is the only one to draw attention — a truly Nandian trademark — to oral and political linkages. In yet another footnote, he draws attention to the fact that while Rammohun Roy had a Muslim cook in Calcutta, he took a Brahmin cook with him to England to defend the proscription of sati before the Privy Council. By now he had turned a pukka Brahmin and stuck to boiled rice and water!

Our next selection in this section is Sarah Caldwell's Robert Stoller Award-winning essay for 1996, 'The Bloodthirsty Tongue and the Self-Feeding Breast: Homosexual Fellatio in a South Indian Ritual Tradition'. Caldwell's main thesis is that 'in Kerala, symbolism of the fierce goddess does not represent abreactions of the primal scene, fantasies of a Kleinian "phallic mother", or introjection of the father's penis; rather, we will show that themes of eroticism and aggression in the mythology are male transsexual fantasies reflecting intense preoedipal fixation on the mother's body and expressing conflicts over primary feminine identity'. Towards the end of her exciting essay, Caldwell speculates, citing Obeyesekere in a passage from *The Work of Culture*, that if Freud had been exposed to Indian patients and myths he would have had to formulate the Indian 'Oedipus' complex in terms 'of identification with the mother and submission to the father', which 'would result in the male developing feminine characteristics — enhanced of course by constitutional bisexuality!' Clearly we return to a now familiar position.

'Selfhood in the Indian Context: A Psychoanalytic Perspective' by Collins and Desai concludes this section. The density and difficulty of this essay — specially enlarged and revised for this historical Reader — is only matched by its originality and uniqueness. Psychoanalysis here is applied to heavy Indian thought, both pre- and post-Upanishadic: 'We will further attempt to use psychoanalytic thought to uncover common theoretical grounds for understanding India's diverse views of the self, and will show that *atman* and *ahamkara* can be reconciled by a deeper understanding of their implicit nature and functions', declare the authors (at the very beginning of their enterprise) who see the same perplexities present 'both in Indian thought and

psychoanalytic object relations theories'. But although they quote the *same* passage from the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad that Freud does in his footnote, sadly, they seem unaware of its vast implications: that we do not have to wait for the emergence of object relations theories to establish affinities between psychoanalysis and Hinduism. Nearly all psychoanalytically inclined observers of contemporary Indian social reality are commented on here, and in the new section added to the original 1986 paper, the authors examine the three kinds of internalization (incorporation, introjection and identification) that Meissner (1980, 1981) posits to determine the kind of internalization that Kohutian psychology describes that could occur in any given culture. They conclude, 'Western, and in particular classical psychoanalytic ideals of stable, permanent individuality based on identifications with and respect for the unalterability of the environment are foreign to the Indian perspective' since 'the Indian personality and world are more fluid, blending together at times, while at other times . . . an interior core of the self is held aloof with practiced detachment . . . Western psychology has idealized the myth of autonomy, whereas Indian thought idealises the myth of merger'.

In the concluding section of our Reader, 'Case Studies of Individuals', we begin with Alan Roland's fascinating case study of Shakuntala, a North Indian Hindu college teacher living in a room in 'someone's flat' in Bombay. Shakuntala's dilemma is not simply being unable to decide between ending an affair with Kumar (her close friend Veena's husband) and having an arranged marriage, but equally between the affair and renouncing the world. 'Thus the interpenetration of the past lives, the present biographical past (conscious and unconscious), the cosmic, and present-day relationship' in Shakuntala matches what we have already encountered in Sudhir Kakar's study of Ramnath. Roland makes the important point that 'it would be a gross misreading of this case to dismiss her spiritual experiences and stirrings' as orthodox psychoanalysis is wont to do. When asked by Roland himself to draw different size circles 'to connote' the comparative importance of psychoanalysis and religion for her (she was, ironically enough at that point, actually being interviewed by someone conducting a study on psychoanalysis and religion!), Shakuntala felt strongly that 'to get the accurate relationship between the

two, she must draw circles of herself in relationship to each of the circles of religion and psychoanalysis. She saw the circle of herself as roughly equal to the circle of psychoanalysis, whereas her own circle was much smaller than that of religion, since her everyday self disappeared once she was in meditation' (Roland: 420). Only we must bear in mind that, for Shakuntala, 'religion' means quite simply Hinduism.

This final concluding section (our shortest) closes with yet another case study, that of a 23-year old Rajasthani villager Dhannaram, already referred to by Collins and Desai in their essay. Using a basically Kohutian perspective, Ramanujam valorizes Hinduism (in an accompanying addendum) by observing that 'the fantasy of being supported by a God-like omnipotent figure should be evaluated as belonging to the assets of a healthy psychological organisation', thus yet again attenuating, the apparent incompatibility between psychoanalysis and Hinduism.

One of our findings, then, in putting together this historical Reader, is that, contrary to the hitherto received wisdom, we would be wholly unwise in dealing with a highly syncretic culture like India to assume a permanent and unresolvable antagonism between psychoanalysis and religion (in this particular case, Hinduism) in our investigation into the psychology of peoples, especially when we are dealing with Asian cultures. In reviewing, then, the literature from the all-encompassing Cosmic Man ('Prajapati') — whom we can take, as Collins and Desai point out, 'as a model of the life cycle of the ancient Indian self' — to the only slightly enlarged self posited by nearly all contemporary psychoanalytic observers of India — except, perhaps, A.K. Ramanujan—(Collins and Desai, B.K. Ramanujam, Roland, Kurtz and Kakar, in spite of their substantial differences), we notice, astonishingly, only a staggering continuity of thought! This continuity invariably takes the form of descriptions of merger (or idealized) relationships with the father (Kakar 1980), the we-self (Roland 1988), the caretaker-self (Kurtz 1992), and the guru as self-object (B.K. Ramanujam 1980). Once we take this 'merger' process still further — if this step is legitimate — we reach the transcendent self (that seems such a commonplace for so many Indians as diverse as Dhannaram and Ramnath) that, in a bizarre reversal, seems more 'individual' — not just 'dividual' — and certainly less merged with others (Kakar 1994)! But perhaps even Roland's

urban sophisticate, Shakuntala, seems well on the way to a self beyond the vicissitudes of the quotidian world where she could, by becoming 'the spiritual head of the ashram', also 'reach the highest spiritual realisation'. We might say, in India at any rate, that the child (with its initial experience of merger and oneness with the mother and other later 'transitional objects' (Winnicott), notably guru figures) is the mother — rather than the father, as Wordsworth thought — of Man!

We can now boldly renegotiate Freud's famous fragment from the *Brihadâranyaka Upanishad*, with which we began, and see why the origin of the world was there derived from the Atman. It has hitherto been a truism among orthodox Freudians that he was indifferent to the environment and its 'appropriateness' to the person. But if we look at his papers on 'metapsychology', written round about 1915 (some of them tragically lost), we realize that Freud was concerned here — especially, in his short paper, 'Mourning and Melancholia' — with showing that aspects of the ego itself are based on the relationship between self and object images. Consider, for instance, his well-known dictum: 'Thus the shadow of the object fell upon the ego, and the latter could henceforth be judged by a special agency, as though it were an object, the foresaken object' (Sigmund Freud, *op cit.*, p. 258). On the same page, a footnote points out that in the first (1917) edition only, the word 'special' does not occur. This was a theme in his writings that was carried upto and including *Civilisations and Its Discontents* (1930). This should seek to dispel notions that only in recent psychoanalytic object relation theories do considerations of 'environmental appropriateness' become important. Once this is acknowledged and we see that ancient Hindu speculation and modern psychoanalysis have the same basic concerns, there need be no basic incompatibility between them. We can now see why Wendy Doniger begins her essay in this volume with the remark: 'Stories from ancient India present a great boon to psychoanalysts trained in the Freudian, Western tradition.' We might well add — keeping in mind the case histories reported by Roland, Ramanujam and Kakar — stories from modern India, as well!

In concluding this note introducing the vastly intriguing subject that is before you, let me, once again, thank the Ford Foundation, New Delhi (in particular, its enterprising and imaginatively

daring officers, R. Sudarshan initially, and later, Anmol Vellani) for supporting me in my quest with the offer of a handsome fellowship between 1992 and 1995, which enabled me to pursue and research this project; often a frustrating business because the lack of adequate and state-of-the-art libraries in India only heightened my dependence on scholars in the US, like Stanley Kurtz initially, but later, others too numerous to list here. However, I must briefly pause here to thank Gananath Obeyesekere of Princeton for suggesting that I read *Kali's Child* before I compile my anthology. This led me to make the acquaintance of its brilliant author, Jeffrey Kripal, who has eventually ended up as my co-editor no less! Early support came from Sudhir Kakar who, in addition to invaluable suggestions on what to include and what to leave out, has been an unfailing source of support throughout—his 'Foreword' to this volume being the least of it. My personal debt to my editors at Oxford — Rukun Advani as always and Anita Roy, a welcome and unexpected arrival from the UK — cannot be adequately acknowledged. I am grateful to Michael Molnar of the Freud Museum, London, for permission to reproduce the photograph of the god Vishnu which appears as the frontispiece, as also for the photograph of Freud's desk on the cover. My thanks also go to my erstwhile secretary, Narayan, whose help in the early period and particularly after my medical setback last year is quite simply staggering. Finally, a big 'thank you' to both Paul Gonsalves and Ravi, who in different ways made me feel that what I was doing was not only worth doing but also that I was not exactly alone getting it done quickly.

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Part One

Girindrasekhar Bose

1

The Genesis and Adjustment of the Oedipus Wish*

Girindrasekhar Bose

One of the earliest psychoanalytical findings was the discovery of the oedipus complex. The information that we harbour in our unconscious mind incestuous thoughts directed towards the mother came as a shock to many. It was difficult to believe that a mind could be so perverted as to look upon the purest human relationship in such a gross light. The knowledge that our affection towards the mother may have a sexual background need not have caused so much surprise. In mythology, folklore and in the literature of every country, there are to be found innumerable stories of such an incestuous relationship. Then again, the purest and noblest amongst us have sometimes openly incestuous dreams. The ancient lawgivers recognized the necessity of provision for the punishment for incest. In the Institutes of Manu there is a distinct injunction against a male's sitting on the same seat with his mother, daughter or sister unless a third party was present, for it is said that human passions and cravings are strong and may upset even the most cultured person. The best known story of mother incest conforming to the peculiarities of the unconscious mind is that of Oedipus Tyrannus by Sophocles. The unconscious incestuous desire has received the name of oedipus complex because of its similarity to the oedipus situation in the drama.

* This article was originally read in a meeting of the Indian Psychoanalytical Society on 30 September 1928. (Ref: *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, vol. X, part 4, October 1929).

Laius, King of Thebes, prayed to the Delphian Apollo for a child. His prayer was heard but he was given to understand that his son would kill him to fulfil the curse of Pelops, whose son he had kidnapped. Jocasta, Laius' wife, gave birth to a son, but to save her husband from his fate, she pierced and tied the child's feet and ordered his servant to expose the child in the desert. The servant however gave the child to a shepherd, who gave it to King Polybus. Polybus named the child Oedipus, meaning swollen feet, and adopted him as his son. When Oedipus grew up he was curious to know his own origin and consulted the oracle which told him that he would kill his father and marry his own mother. To avoid such a fate, Oedipus left the place of his adoption but accidentally met Laius, his own father, and killed him in a quarrel. He then solved the riddle of the Sphinx and as a reward was declared King of Thebes and was given Jocasta, his own widowed mother, in marriage. When Oedipus became aware of his true relationship with Jocasta and Laius, he blinded himself out of repentance and went into voluntary exile.

In the story Oedipus killed his father. So also in the unconscious mind there is a hostility against the father associated with the love for the mother. These two traits together are associated with the oedipus complex. Besides this hostile attitude directed towards the father, the oedipus situation invariably reveals other traits which have not received sufficient attention from psychoanalysis. In the present article I shall try to show how very complicated the oedipus situation is and how it arrests our attention. Besides such prominent landmarks in the oedipus situation a careful scrutiny will always uncover other less prominent traits which are of equal importance in the make up of the oedipus fabric. The connections between the different traits gradually come into view as cases are analysed in large numbers. The theory of the genesis of the oedipus complex as described here has been built up on the foundation of actual analysis. My views differ somewhat and in some important points from the existing views on the subject. I have quoted very freely from Freud to show how most of the workers look upon the problem. A statement of Freud's views as presented here will enable anyone to note the differences in my point of view.

Infantile Sexuality

In his three contributions to the Sexual Theory, Freud drew attention to certain peculiarities in the development of the infantile libido. According to him, sexual object choice is established in early childhood so that all sexual trends become directed towards one single person in whom they try to seek fulfilment. The child libido therefore resembles the adult libido very closely. The only difference that Freud could notice was that in childhood the libido was more or less uniformly distributed over the different erogenous zones so that any special sexual significance of the genital organs was wanting. The primacy of the genital organ is not effected in childhood. Later findings have compelled Freud to change this view. In an article entitled 'The Infantile Genital Organization of the Libido' which appeared in the 1924 April number of *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, Freud says,

> I am today no longer satisfied with the statement that the primacy of the genitals is not effected in the early period of the childhood or only very imperfectly. The approximation of sexuality to that of the adult goes much farther and is not limited solely to the establishment of an object attachment. Even if perfect concentration of the component impulses under the primacy of the genitals is not attained, at any rate at the height of the development of childhood-sexuality the functioning of the genitals and the interest in them reaches predominant significance, which comes little short of that reached in maturity. The difference between these two — the 'infantile genital organization' and the 'final genital organization' of the adult constitutes also the main characteristic of the infantile form, namely that for both sexes in childhood only one kind or genital organ comes into account — the male. The primacy reached is not therefore a primacy of the genitals but of the phallus.

Freud further says,

> This finding is mainly based on the information obtained from males and represents the state of affairs in the male child. The corresponding processes in the little girl are not sufficiently known. The little boy at first believes that the girl is endowed with a penis like himself. The accidental sight of the genitalia of a little girl first gives the information to the boy that the girl is differently constituted. The boy tries to believe that the penis is there, that it is small and it will grow and so on. If at this period the boy has been admonished with threats of

castration for improprieties in connection with his penis the absence in the little girl is thought to be the result of a castration and his own fears are aroused resulting in the development of what is called the castration complex. The castration threat becomes significant only when the primacy of the genital phase has been attained. The absence of the penis in girls causes a sexual depreciation in the eyes of the little boy and is one of the factors in the genesis of homosexuality. Since the castration can only come as a punishment the little boy comes to think that only wicked females lose their penis but respectable females such as the mother retain their penis intact. Later when the boy comes to learn that only women can bear children the mother is considered to have been deprived of her penis as a substitute for which she gets a child. A knowledge of the true state of things is acquired much later.

Freud on the Passing of the Oedipus Complex

In an article entitled 'The Passing of the Oedipus Complex', which appeared in the 1924 October number of *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, Freud had discussed the factors which cause the disappearance of the oedipus complex. The oedipus complex forms the central phenomenon of the sexual period in early childhood but later on repression sets in and causes its disappearance. This is followed by what is known as the latency period. Two theories have been put forward to account for this repression. One is that it is brought about by the painful disappointment and lack of success of the wishes, which go to form the oedipus complex. The other view is that it is a preordained decay in the natural course of the mental development of the child. These two views are not incompatible with each other, but there is the necessity for investigating the exact mechanism by which this decay is brought about.

The phallic primary phase is contemporaneous with the Oedipus complex. The phallic phase does not uninterruptedly lead to adult development but becomes submerged during the latency period. According to Freud, the phallic stage of the genital organization succumbs to the threat of castration helped by other factors. The child has been already prepared for the loss of a valued part of the body by the withdrawal of the mother's breast and the evacuation of the bowels. The final blow comes when the child sees the female genital organ, perhaps accidentally, in

a little girl. The loss of his own penis becomes a dangerous possibility and the castration threat becomes effective. The oedipus complex offers the child two possibilities of satisfaction, an active or a passive one. It can either put itself in its father's place and can have intercourse with the mother, or it can put itself in the place of the mother. In the former case, the father becomes a rival and the possibility of castration in his hands becomes acute, and in the second case, to play the part of the female, a prerequisite would be to give up the penis. So that in either case, the boy comes to lose his valuable organ. A conflict thus arises between the narcissistic interest in the penis and the libidinal cathexis of the parent-objects. The narcissistic wish triumphs over the other and the child's ego turns away from the oedipus complex. By a process of identification with the parents, their authority is introjected into the child's ego and forms the nucleus of the superego, which by imposing restrictions like the father, keep the oedipus wishes in check. The oedipus sexual feeling is transformed and sublimated into affection. This process introduces the latency period. The result is the destruction and abrogation of the complex in the most successful cases. It is something more than repression. If the results are not so satisfactory then the oedipus complex persists unconsciously and expresses itself later on in some pathogenic effect.

Our knowledge of the oedipus complex in females is not very satisfactory. According to Freud the female also develops an oedipus complex and a superego and passes through the latency period. There is also in the female a phallic organization and a castration complex, although working in a different manner. She believes in the existence of phallus in the adult female and thinks she will acquire just as big an appendage when she grows up. When she comes to know of the castration, she is powerless and thus the motive for the formation of the superego and the breaking up of the infantile sexual organization loses its force. Educational influences and the threat of loss of love bring about the adult modification of sexuality in her case. Freud believes that the oedipus complex in girls is simpler than in the boy and seldom goes beyond the wish to take the mother's place. The girl finds in the child a compensation for the loss of the penis. She expects a child to be given to her by her father, which hope is bound to remain unfulfilled. The comparative weakness of the sadistic

element of the libido in the female — which is attributable according to Freud to the absence of the penis — makes it possible for an easy sublimation of the sexual trends into affectionate ones.

Freud says,

> I have no doubt that the temporal and causal relations described between the oedipus complex, sexual intimidation (the threat of castration), formation of the superego and advent of the latency period are of a typical kind; but I do not maintain that this type is the only possible one. Variation in the sequence and the linking up of these processes must be very significant in the development of the individual. Since the publication of Otto Rank's interesting study on the trauma of birth, the conclusion that the boy's oedipus complex succumbs to the dread of castration cannot be accepted without further discussion. It seems to me premature, however, to enter upon this discussion at the present time.

Retaliation and Identity

In connection with my theory of the opposite wish, I have shown elsewhere that when a person is struck there rises in him a desire to strike the offender, and unless there is an opportunity for the satisfaction of this desire, a painful tension results. The desire for retaliation or revenge follows the Mosaic Law — an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. According to my theory of the opposite wish, in every instance the satisfaction, whether voluntary or involuntary, of any wish, leads to the development of its opposite. In every individual there is the unconscious desire to be struck so that when this finds a sort of involuntary satisfaction by the assault, its opposite, the desire to strike, rises in the conscious and is felt as the desire for revenge. Whenever a particular set of circumstances occur in such a way as to lead repeatedly to the satisfaction of only one particular type of wish, a desire to behave in an opposite manner gradually develops in the consciousness and ultimately finds vent in action. If the opportunities for the satisfaction of the opposite wish are wanting, there is an accumulation of tension in the system. In some cases, the opposite wish may not have a social sanction. Retaliation is not always a practical possibility in a civilized society. In such cases where the opposite wish may not have a social sanction tension may be relieved by symbolic actions or by day-dreams or such other

methods as lead to imaginary satisfaction of the wish. If the individual had previous opportunities of satisfaction of such wishes, as are either akin to, or identical with the forbidden wish, a much more satisfactory and permanent solution of the tension would be possible. Under these circumstances there may result an identification with the agent which produced the provocation. The subject places himself in the situation of the offender and can sympathize with his motives and actions. Forgiveness, forbearance and resignation become possible and all tension is relieved. When the desire for revenge has been satisfied identification becomes easier. Revenge or retaliation leads to an identity of the action only of the offender and is a preliminary step to identification with the subject. Retaliation consists in reversing the subject-object relationship, the action remaining constant. Identification on the other hand is transferring the ego to the position of the object. Identity leads to the expansion of the ego. The person who identifies himself with another becomes interested in the different activities of the latter. For the convenience of description, I shall describe the retaliation mechanism as the 'identity of action' and true identification as 'identity of ego'.

The Oedipus Triangle

The child receives certain attentions from the mother that lead to the satisfaction of a definite type of craving, which I might designate as the child-mother craving. The desire to be fed by the mother, to be caressed by the mother, etc. belong to this class. Continued and repeated satisfaction of these cravings bring about a rise of the opposite class of hankering viz., the mother-child cravings, which consist of desires to feed a child, to caress a child etc. In the first place this leads to an identity of action only, and the child caresses the mother in return for her affections, pretends to feed her, to put her to sleep and to indulge in similar play. When the channel for identification is widened by such actions, the child begins to place itself in the position of the mother (identity of ego) and finds pleasure in playing the mother with its dolls. This is true both of the male and the female child. The identification of the child's ego with the mother leads to an expansion of the child's self. The child begins to get interested in things in which the mother shows interest. The father thus

becomes a new centre of interest and is apprehended from the standpoint of the mother. If the father be equally affectionate like the mother, the child-father and father-child relationships develop as in the case of the mother, and the father's activities are copied by the child. The beginning of identification with the mother results in the development of a new angle of vision and a new significance in the child-father and father-child relationships. The child looks upon the father from the standpoint of the mother i.e., it behaves like its father's wife. The development of this phase leads ultimately to an identification with the father via the mother. At this stage the child takes up the role of its father and looks upon its mother as its wife. Identity of action and identity of ego make it possible for the child to appreciate the threefold relationship of child-mother-father from three different angles. From its own standpoint it knows how a child feels towards its mother and father and how the two parents feel differently towards himself. From the mother's angle it knows how a woman feels towards her child and husband and vice versa. From its father's standpoint it knows how a man feels towards his wife and his son and vice versa. The whole situation may be graphically represented by a diagram.

If the identification works without any hitch a perfect understanding and sympathy with the parents develop; but this is seldom so. Many factors operate to prevent the identification mechanism from working smoothly and when one-sided influences are at work repression comes into play with all its attendant consequences. The growing sexuality of the child invests the triple relationship with a sexual significance which is of the greatest importance to the life of the individual. The sexual colouring in the triple relationship appears very early in life. When we remember that childhood sexuality before the advent of the latency period approaches the adult form very closely, we need not wonder that very complicated sexual images and all possible sexual situations are brought up in the child's mind. From the standpoint of the mother, the child feels the desire to be its father's wife and to bear him a child. It acquires a femininity in its character which manifests itself in reactions with other people also. From the standpoint of the father, the child behaves like a dominating male and wants to beget a child by its mother and so on. These different standpoints lead to secondary reaction

formations, the importance of which cannot be overestimated. The feminine attitude towards the father leads to the development of passive homosexuality and other secondary phenomena. It will be noticed that some of these attitudes are mutually contradictory. For instance, the mother and father attitudes cannot rise in consciousness simultaneously. Under normal conditions, the satisfaction of one attitude leads to the satisfaction of its opposite by the mechanism of unconscious identity, as I have shown elsewhere. The female attitude requires for its satisfaction the appreciation of male characteristics, which means an unconscious identification with the male and vice versa. As already stated, when the conditions are one-sided, repression and failure of the mechanism of identification occurs, leading to an internal struggle between the opposite types of wishes. It is only under these conditions that the oedipus complex makes its appearance. When the identification works without a hitch there is perfect sympathy with all the three standpoints. It is my contention that the Oedipus complex can only be adjusted under such favourable circumstances. In the course of psychoanalytic treatment one can see the struggle between such contradictory tendencies, sometimes the one and sometimes the other gaining prominence in consciousness. When one attitude is prominent there is intolerance for its opposite. As adjustment proceeds, identification with the opposite phase becomes more and more effective and ultimately, sympathy for both the opposite standpoints becomes possible. I shall indicate the course of such a struggle with its secondary reaction formations.

Oedipus Reactions

Let me begin with the attitude of the child towards its mother. When the child just begins to be differentiated from its environment, passive experiences play the predominant role. Gradually, as the ego develops, the child feels that most of the significant impressions come from the mother. Repeated submission to such passive situations gives rise to active wishes of a similar nature in the child's mind by what I have described before as the mechanism of 'identity of reaction'. The child acts like the mother, with the mother as the object. If the mother's caresses have been very passionate the child reacts in a similar manner with an additional

sexual colouring as a result of sexual tendencies developing in the child's mind. It is curious, however, that this primary phase of sexual attraction towards the mother is seldom unearthed during analysis. It does not seem to form an important component of the oedipus complex. It is quite possible that in certain types of cases, this primary sexual phase may be predominant but where this happens the typical Oedipus hatred is likely to be wanting because the father does not seem to come into the situation at all. Action-identity gradually leads to ego identity and the child places itself in the situation of its mother. It plays with dolls imagining them to be children, looks upon its father as a husband, and if the child happens to be an accidental witness of parental intercourse at this stage, it places itself in imagination in the passive situation of the mother. A true feminine sexual attitude develops towards the father and this may even culminate in a desire to have a child by him. At this stage of sexual development, the genitalia of the child are already rich in sensations and this, coupled with the knowledge of the difference in sexual organization in the male and the female, makes the male child wish for a removal of its phallus. It may be mentioned that in Indian children a true knowledge of the male and female genitalia is present from a very early age. Castration wish is thus a natural outcome of the desire to be a woman. The child sometimes playfully asks its mother to dress it up as a grown-up woman and it plays the role of a wife with other children or even with adults. This game, which is called 'bow how khel' or 'playing the wife' is extremely common among boys and girls at a certain age in this country. I recall to mind a curious case of a young boy who always dressed like a girl and to make the resemblance perfect used to tie a piece of string round his prepuce and draw the penis tightly over the scrotum fixing the free end of the string behind his back like the end of a T-bandage. By this process the penis was kept covered by the folds of the scrotum and the whole genitalia showed a remarkable resemblance to the female organ. The desire to be a woman or its modification, the castration wish, is regularly discernible in all analyses. The castration dread is a later product and is a defence against the corresponding wish. As I have mentioned in my article on the genesis of homosexuality, the castration threat as described by European observers is seldom seen in Indian patients. In my European cases the castration

complex has regularly come up during analysis but here also it has almost invariably been traced to the desire to be a woman. I shall indicate later on how the castration threat leads to the development of the castration complex.

In the female child, the whole psycho-sexual constitution is in favour of the feminine attitude towards the father, so that this phase of sexual development is much more developed than in the male. This has an important bearing in the production of hysteria, as I have indicated elsewhere. In the male, besides castration, there is another possibility of playing the female role. The anus, which is also an important erogenous zone in the child, may take the place of female genitals, so that in the feminine sexual phase the child develops passive homosexuality directed towards the father. The faeces at this phase stand as a symbol for the child. Infantile theories of anal childbirth help to strengthen this attitude. In the feminine or passive homosexual role, the child imagines suitable sexual situations with the father and interprets its father's behaviour in the light of its own attitude. Continuous imaginary indulgence in such passive wishes gives rise to the corresponding active desire by the mechanism of action identity and the child assumes an active male role towards the father, who is either imagined to be a woman, or is made to play the passive homosexual part. The child may even go to the extent of imagining his father without a penis and giving birth to a child. The action identity phase gradually proceeds to ego identity and the child's ego feels like its father's ego. The father's interests become the child's interests and the child imagines itself to be a grown-up man like his father. The mother becomes a new sexual object and is looked upon from the standpoint of the father. I have called this phase 'the oedipus point' in my article on the genesis of homosexuality. The child wants to impregnate the mother and to give her a child of its own. He also appreciates the father's attitude towards his son and plays the protector's role towards the younger brothers and other children and also towards the mother. The child is thus made to appreciate the triple role of the child, the mother and the father. If the development proceeds as I have described above, no hatred is developed towards the father and there is perfect sympathy with all the three persons in the child-mother-father grouping. The sexual trends towards the parents are soon sublimated and turned to affection.

There is no parental fixation of the libido and possibilities of normal sexual development remain unimpaired. For the realization of this ideal state of things it is necessary that the parent's behaviour should be such as to make it possible for the child to satisfy, at least in imagination, his opposite active and passive tendencies directed towards them. A certain amount of give and take policy on the part of the parents is a prerequisite condition. But unfortunately, the child is very often submitted to one-sided influences only, with the result that repression sets in at one phase or another of sexual development and the oedipus complex with its many-sided inhibitions develops. Analyses of oedipus cases invariably bring to light all the different phases of the triple relationship that I have indicated before and adjustment resulting in cure only takes place when there is sympathy for all the three actors in the triangular alliance.

The Oedipus Wish

I shall now indicate how the oedipus disturbance arises and describe the different manifestations that are traceable to it. It must be remembered that a particular pathological manifestation is very often the result of over-determination and several different factors may be responsible for its genesis. Most of my information has been derived from analyses of adult subjects, both male and female. I might mention that the findings were fully justified in a few cases of children that I had the opportunity of analysing.

As I have mentioned before, the primary phase of child-mother and mother-child relationships seldom comes up in analysis of oedipus cases; so I am not in a position to point out any disturbance arising out of this stage of development with any degree of confidence. The subsequent phases regularly come up during analysis. The feminine attitude of the child towards its father is poignant with the possibilities of maladjustment. If there is fixation of libido in this attitude the female becomes incapable of loving any male except the father. Sometimes the choice of the love-object is determined by some characteristic of the father present in the person who is taken for a husband. Hysterical manifestations may often be traced to this factor. In the male child, fixation of the libido in the feminine attitude leads to the development of feminine traits and passive homosexuality.

Abnormal shyness in the presence of superiors and want of self-assertion become marked characteristics. Diseases and neurotic symptoms symbolical of female coitus and childbirth are present, the father image or a father substitute taking the active role. Castration ideas, menstruation dreams and impotency are frequent manifestations. Day-dreams of sexual intercourse are indulged in, the subject identifying himself with the female character. Owing to the working of the repression there is always a struggle even in the imaginary satisfaction of these feminine cravings so that some form of defence is always attempted. Various abdominal symptoms interfering with the free evacuation of the bowels may make their appearance. The phantasies of sexual aggression by the father, who is a revered person, are modified by the bringing in of the images of low-class people and roughs playing the aggressive sexual role. When the defence is pushed further the passive wishes are transferred into fear. Fear of assault—found to be sexual on analysis— fear of contamination by low persons, and fear of thieves who stand for father images may arise with obsessional intensity. The castration wish becomes transformed into the castration dread, the father or a father substitute playing the aggressive role. The castration threat becomes effective only at this phase. The small penis complex also has a partial determinant in the feminine attitude. The next phase of defence is ushered in by the mechanism of identity of action coming into operation. It is to be remembered that identity of action is a preliminary step to the identity of ego, which leads to a sympathetic understanding of the offending agent. The defence which is set up by the mechanism of action identity is therefore at the same time a step towards a cure of the repression. In the action identity phase the child tries to convert the father into a female, while he himself plays the aggressive male role. In the child's imagination the father is treated as a woman and is made to give birth to a child, or he is compelled to play the passive homosexual role. The sadistic component of the libido now finds a vent for discharge and a hostile attitude develops towards the father. The threat of castration is now directed against the father by the child as retaliation. The oedipus hostility towards the father is directly traceable to this phase of the child's development. It is no mere rivalry for the possession of the mother but it has a distinct sexual colouring.

The active homosexuality, which in the first place is directed towards the father, may also be pointed towards other love objects of the same or lower age. The feminine role of the father has a very interesting significance. When the ego-identity with the father, which is the next stage in development, is established an oedipus love towards the mother develops and the father's feminine role is foisted off on the mother. The oedipus mother therefore is a combined image. She represents the father as well as the mother. If the libido is fixed in the action identity phase of the mother-father relationship, the male child turns homosexual. In the case of the female child, homosexuality develops if the libido is fixed at the oedipus point. The first phase of homosexuality in the female is of the active type, whereas in the male it is of the passive type. I have discussed this in greater detail in my paper on the genesis of homosexuality. Jealousy towards the sexual partner is traceable to homosexuality and femininity in the male and masculinity in the female.

The true oedipus point develops with the onset of ego-identity with the father, and the mother is taken up as the sexual love object. The desire to give her a child comes into existence. Anomalies of development of this phase result in the choice of elderly females as love objects by the male. The respectability of the mother image is sought to be neutralized by the substitution of the mother by the sister or women of lower social status and even prostitutes. There is impaired potency and obsessional fear of not being able to satisfy the woman in the sexual act. The small penis complex receives a further strengthening from this source, the child's penis being considered too small for the mother. Action-identity in the father-mother situation leads to the adoption of the passive attitude in coitus. The subject prefers the sexual partner to play the active role. With the advent of ego-identity in the father-mother relationship, sympathy for the woman from the standpoint of the man develops and the oedipus complex is adjusted. The oedipus wish thus does not succumb to the threat of castration but to the ability to put the ego in the position of the mother in the father-mother relationship and to the ability to defy the father and to castrate him, i.e., to make him into a woman. In the oedipus story, the hero finds a solution of his unfortunate situation by giving up his love object and blinding himself — i.e., by symbolical castration. He gives up the

fight against the father image which persists in spite of his killing his father and transforms himself into a woman before him. The solution is not an ideal one and will not be workable in the present day society.

The oedipus situation in the female presents certain special peculiarities which are worth considering. Amongst Indian women the desire to have a male child in preference to a female is almost universal. The social super-ego is no foreign imposition on the child's mind. It is that part of the child's personality which wants to play the role of the father. The sense of guilt and the punishing conscience are all ultimately traceable to the opposition between the male and the female halves of the child's personality. I do not agree with Freud when he says that the oedipus wishes ultimately succumb to the authority of the super-ego. Quite the reverse is the case. The super-ego must be conquered and the ability to castrate the father and making him into a woman is an essential requisite for the adjustment of the oedipus wish. The oedipus is resolved not by the threat of castration, but by the ability to castrate. Freud has to assume the importance of educational factors in the solution of the oedipus conflict in the case of the girl, because in her case the castration threat is ineffective and the motive for the formation of the super-ego correspondingly weaker. No such special mechanism need be assumed according to my view in the case of the girl. Here also a perfect and sympathetic understanding of the three points in the triangular alliance is the effective factor in the adjustment of the oedipus tendency. I have already mentioned that in the case of Indian patients the castration complex is never prominent, although the castration threat is almost a daily admonition in Indian homes. This will serve to support my contention that the castration threat is not the essential factor in oedipus adjustment. Superficial analysis of European patients seems to show the importance of the castration complex; but whenever the analysis is pushed deeper, the desire to be a woman is found to be the central element of the castration situation.

Illustrative Points from Case Histories

Case 233: An elderly Indian lady suffering from obsessional psychoneurosis develops a strong positive transference of a gross

sexual type in the course of treatment. She becomes intensely jealous of another patient, who she thinks is receiving the affections of the doctor. She is tormented by the thought that the doctor would never love her and all her love would go unreciprocated. Sometimes she thinks that the doctor sexually loves the other patient and at other times she thinks it to be impossible. She dreams of her brother reporting to her that the doctor is a loose-character, a profligate. The patient feels her own sexual love towards the doctor whom she looks upon both in the position of a son and a father. The patient has a dream of having sexual intercourse with her own father, who in the dream is lying in the same bed with her. Along with the transference symptoms there is intense fear of infection by germs. Typhoid and cholera are the diseases she is most afraid of. The fear of keeping contaminated articles inside a box is even greater than the fear of contact with such articles and of taking contaminated food or water. Analysis reveals the fact that the germ stands for semen. She is afraid of abdominal disorders which represent pregnancy and delivery. There is difficulty in imagining the doctor, who stands as a composite image for her father and son, in playing the male sexual role. Incomplete identity with the father in the mother-father situation is responsible for the symptoms. Directly this is adjusted, the patient recognizes without a struggle the possibility of the doctor being a sexually bad man. Her jealousy for the other patient disappears and the conscious wish to have from the doctor a child who will resemble him comes up in consciousness although the patient is past the child-bearing age. The sense of guilt and sin which has been present all along now disappears and the patient simply acknowledges the presence of the wishes as something which is only socially wrong. All struggle and unpleasantness in connection with the undesirable wishes come to an end. It is to be noticed that the patient always described the love of situation in a passive way at first, e.g. 'she ought to get the love of the doctor', 'the other patient is being loved by the doctor' and so on. In the latter phase of treatment when the identity with the father image is established the patient said, 'the doctor does not love her', 'the doctor loves the other patient', and so on.

Case 261: The patient is a paraphrenic young Bengalee. Ideas of unchastity of his wife form one of the most prominent

symptoms. The patient tries to assure himself of the falsity of such ideas but they come with overwhelming force. The very sight and even the suggestion of the name of certain persons, who are supposed to have loved his wife, upset him. Free association on the very first day of analysis brings to light a female attitude, which is seen later on to be associated with his father and certain other persons, who are suspected in connection with his wife. Chief among such persons is a certain Mr L, a young man with revolutionary ideas. Patient says that when he thinks of L it seems to him that his penis and testes vanish altogether and in their place a female sexual organ appears. Subsequent associations bring to light a tussle between his male and female attitudes and the ideas of childbirth come up in his mind. At this stage the patient remembers that sometime ago when the disease was at its height and he had hallucinations and illusions, in passing stools he used to hear hallucinatory remarks from his guru (religious preceptor, a father substitute) to the effect 'Have you given me a child?' A few days afterwards another interesting incident is remembered. Once when he was being troubled by 'objectionable' thoughts about his wife, the idea came into his head, 'Why try to balance these thoughts on your wife; remember your preceptor's advice and balance them on your own anus'. He then said to himself, 'Let me see the fun', and introduced a fountain pen up his anus. There was no pleasure but curiously enough the disturbing thoughts about his wife disappeared and he regained his peace of mind. Next day's associations show a splitting up of the subject's ego into male and female halves: the male half identifying itself with low class men, Mahomedans, roughs, L and father; the female half identifies itself with his wife, a low class woman, and a widowed character in a Bengali novel. The same night the patient dreams that he is a man, while his father and brother are all converted into 'women'. Next day the patient brings up the idea that his father harbours sexual thoughts towards his wife. He recalls to mind several instances where he felt sexual thoughts towards his own mother and mother-in-law. He cannot look at their photographs in the presence of the father or father-in-law. Passive sexual thoughts of the type 'mother is being enjoyed' come up in his mind. In having intercourse with his wife he binds a handkerchief over his eyes as it gives him the feeling of being

a bride in veil (c.f. Oedipus blinding himself) and thinks that his wife's organ is his mother's organ and his own penis his father's penis.

Case 334: European male, young and unmarried. Suffers from periodic fits of intense depression. Patient's sexual potency is impaired and he looks down upon sexual love but has a strong hankering for love of the spiritual type. The patient is religiously inclined.

Analysis reveals a strong resistance to normal sexual love and a flight to homosexuality and spirituality. Castration situations in the presence of the father come up early during analysis and this is coupled with an unconscious hatred for the father. A male friend of the patient is seen to stand for the mother. Later on this friend is also found to be a father substitute. Much later another composite image comes up in the person of a governess, who because of her severity stands for the father and as female for the mother. Oedipus wishes are present with reference to this composite image. The oedipus mother is sometimes conceived of as a willing partner in the sexual act and sometimes as a harsh and forbidding mother. Hostile and friendly images of the father come up both in active and passive homosexual situations. Incest fear is present and is traceable to the hostile father on the one hand and the unwilling mother on the other. When the adjustment comes both father and mother turn out to be friendly and willing and the desire to have a child by the mother appears in the associations. Images of complete sexual intercourse, which were impossible to conjure up before, now become easy and the patient has a phantasy of coitus with a mother image who has an impotent husband. Ideas of gross sexuality and disrespect for the father become prominent, associated with the desire to have a child by the mother. Next comes up the idea of forcing the father to give birth to a child and of castrating the father. Sadism coupled with exhibitionism are the next to appear associated with the ideas of potency. Efforts to combine spirituality with sexuality are present and also a desire for unrestricted sexual life. Sympathy both for a strict father and for a disobedient as well as an obedient son develops. The flight from sexuality is found to be linked to the desire to be a woman.

Part Two

Freud and Hinduism

2

Freud's Encounter with Hinduism: An Historical-Textual Overview

William B. Parsons

When one thinks of Freud and religion, matters concerning Oedipus, the *uber-ich*, projection or the *unbehagen* caused by institutionalized Christianity may readily come to mind. Hinduism would not be immediately evoked for good reason: there is no overt evidence which suggests that Freud reflected on eastern religions in any substantial way. Indeed, as is evident in his correspondence with men like Girindrasekhar Bose, Freud's turn eastwards is more likely to be associated with the establishment of psychoanalysis in India and controversies surrounding the applicability of psychoanalytic theory to other cultures.[1]

It is unquestionably the case that there is a dearth of references to Hinduism in the Freudian Corpus. The references which do exist can be found in what appears to be an unconnected series of meaningless passages and obscure footnotes. However, properly contextualized, these texts form a cohesive narrative which demonstrates that Freud's engagement with Hindu texts, practices and ideology was far more substantial than previously thought. In order to make manifest what has remained latent, this essay will analyse neglected aspects of Freud's cultural texts as well as crucial correspondences, each grouped into one of three historical periods (1893–1923; 1923–1930; 1930–1936), all of which detail Freud's reflections on Hinduism. To help unearth

the consistency of meaning which bridges Freud's disparate remarks, socio-historical and literary considerations will be taken into account.

The Indian Influence on Plato

From Freud's initial study of hysteria (1893) to what Strachey refers to as his last major theoretical contribution, *The Ego and the Id* (1923), only one significant reference to Hinduism, a footnote to a late passage in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), can be found. The passage in question reveals Freud citing Plato's myth of the origin of sexuality, as found in *The Symposium*. Following 'the hint given us by the poet-philosopher', Freud argues for the revisioning of psychoanalytic instinct theory. In the footnote to this passage, he goes on to address the debate over the Indian influence on Plato's thought. Citing his conversations with Heinrich Gomperz and Max Müller's translation of the *Brihadaranyaka-Upanishad*, Freud, in contrast to 'the prevailing opinion', hesitates to 'give an unqualified denial to the possibility of Plato's myth being derived from the Indian source', since he thought a similar possibility could not be excluded with respect to the doctrine of transmigration. Indeed, Freud goes further, lending credibility to the Upanishadic insight: 'Plato would not have adopted a story of this kind . . . unless it had struck him as containing an element of truth.'[2]

The reference to Plato should come as no surprise. Freud was well-schooled in the classics of the western humanistic tradition. He claimed to have received inspiration from introspective geniuses like Schiller, Goethe, Schopenhauer and Shakespeare, referring to them as his 'masters' and 'teachers' in their anticipation of psychoanalytic metapsychology. To the Italian philosopher and writer Giovanni Papini, Freud said that psychoanalysis was

> no more than the interpretation of a literacy vocation in terms of psychology and pathology. . . . In psychoanalysis you may find fused together though changed into scientific jargon, the three greatest literary schools of the 19th century: Heine, Zola and Mallarmé and united in me under the patronage of my old master, Goethe.[3]

Indeed, it was the respect Freud showed for these historic figures which led the ego-psychologist Ernst Kris to dub them 'intuitive

psychologists'.[4] Of course Freud found other uses for such culturally-esteemed figures. Throughout his works one finds him invoking them for the rhetorical purpose of granting social legitimacy to his emerging science of the mind.

More important is Freud's added reference to the *Upanishads*, Müller and Gomperz. The reference to Müller is, quite obviously, to his monumental *Sacred Books of the East*, a series which contained the translation of the Upanishad in question. As for Heinrich Gomperz, Freud had a long standing relationship with the Gomperz family. Theodor Gomperz, a famous professor of Classics and historian of Greek thought at the University of Vienna, had enlisted Freud as a translator for the works of John Stuart Mill in 1879–80. Years later Freud would admit that it was then he had encountered Mill's essay on Plato and how deeply Plato's theory of reminiscence had affected him. Gomperz's wife Elise was both friend and patient, while son Heinrich, who became a correspondent of Freud's, was a professor of philosophy at the University of Vienna. Gomperz was conversant with Freud's work on dreams and had written on the influence of Indian thought on Plato.[5]

These observations suggest the channels through which Freud was influenced by an important cultural and intellectual movement of the nineteenth century, referred to by Raymond Schwab as 'the oriental renaissance', which saw the arrival of numerous Sanskrit texts and the growth of oriental studies in European universities.[6] But did Freud take a serious interest in the scholarly issues and debates which animated the oriental renaissance? In what way does his seemingly positive view of the *Upanishads* allow for entertaining the possibility that the classic works of the East, as well as those of the West, influenced his thought?

The Goetz Letters

There is no overt evidence in Freud's written corpus which serves to shed further light on this matter. However, there does exist a neglected but significant document, containing what appears to be Freud's earliest reflection on Hinduism, which is directly relevant to our concerns. The document, which I dub 'The Goetz Letters', concerns the recollections of the Swiss poet Bruno Goetz, who encountered Freud during his days as a

student in 1904–5 at the University of Vienna.[7] Goetz visited Freud a number of times, engaging him in conversation about sexuality, poetry and religion. These conversations were recorded in a series of letters to a friend which, according to Goetz, contain ' . . . verbatim, although in fragmentary form, statements made by Freud'.[8]

In one such visit Goetz relayed information about his studies at the university. He expressed his interest in Indian thought, referring to the enthusiasm that the noted Sanskrit scholar, Leopold von Schroeder, had inspired in him. In particular, Goetz mentioned how he was captivated by von Schroeder's lectures on the *Bhagavad Gita*. It was at this point Freud 'sprang briskly to his feet', began to pace, and then responded at length:

> Take care, young man, take care . . . . You are quite right to be enthusiastic. For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. Your heart will always win the day, but keep that cool head which, fortunately, you still have. Don't be taken off your guard. A clear, sparkling intellect is one of the greatest gifts. The poet of the *Bhagavad Gita* would be the first to affirm that very thing. Always be on the look-out, always keep your eyes open, always be aware of everything, always be of unswerving courage, but never let yourself be dazzled, never let yourself get tied up in knots. Emotion must not become auto-anaesthesia. Dostoyevsky's principle: 'Head first, head over heels into the abyss' is all very fine, but the enthusiasm which it has aroused in Europe is based on a sad misunderstanding. The *Bhagavad Gita* is a great and profound poem with awful depths. 'And still it lay beneath me hidden deep in purple darkness there' says Schiller's diver, who never returns from his second brave attempt. If, however, without the aid of a clear intellect you become immersed in the world of the *Bhagavad Gita*, where nothing seems constant and where everything melts into everything else, then you are suddenly confronted by nothingness. Do you know what it means to be confronted by nothingness? Do you know what that means? And yet this very nothingness is simply a European misconception: The Indian nirvana is not nothingness, it is that which transcends all contradictions. It is not, as Europeans commonly take it to be, a sensual enjoyment, but the ultimate in superhuman understanding, an ice-cold, all-comprehending yet scarcely comprehensible insight. Or, if misunderstood, it is madness. What do these European would-be mystics know about the profundity of the East? They rave on, but they know nothing. And then they are surprised when they lose their

> heads and are not infrequently driven mad by it — literally driven out of their minds . . . . The most sensible thing to do is to keep on asking questions. At the moment you are interested in the Hindu philosophers. They often went so far as to express their answers in the form of questions. They knew why.[9]

Freud's reference to nirvana in the above passage is striking. His comment on the European fascination with and interpretation of *nirvana* ('nothingness'; 'sensual enjoyment') indicates that he was indeed aware of the debates and issues engendered by the oriental renaissance. Like the controversy over the Indian influence on Plato, the debate over the meaning of the term 'nirvana' was a substantial, pervasive and heated one. As Guy Welbon has pointed out, during the course of the nineteenth century this debate engaged the finest minds. Sanskritists like Thomas Colebrooke, scholars like Eugene Burnouf and Hermann Oldenberg, philosophers like Schopenhauer and Nietzsche and, of course, the comparativist Max Müller, were all drawn to this debate.[10] Goetz's teacher, Leopold von Schroeder, played a role as well. His translations became part of the debate and were cited by Burnouf in support of his position.[11]

The participants in the debate seemed to agree on the precise translation of nirvana. In this they followed Colebrooke, who put it succinctly:

> In its ordinary acceptation, as an adjective, it signifies extinct, as a fire which has gone out: set, as a luminary which has gone down; defunct, as a saint who has passed away: its etymology is from *va*, to blow as wind, with the preposition *nir* used in a negative sense: it means calm and unruffled.[12]

What remained perplexing were its ontological and psychological implications. Here one finds a broad spectrum of diverse and competing interpretations, ranging from negative views of nirvana as signifying an extinction or annihilation of the self, hence leading to nihilism, apathy and atheism, to more positive assessments advocating nirvana as world-affirming and blissful.[13] Of particular interest to our concerns is Welbon's distinction between soteriological and metaphysical explanations of nirvana. Metaphysical explanations hold that nirvana, conceived of as a thing-in-itself, is beyond the ability of the mind or language to grasp. As such, speculation on what metaphysical reality one is

delivered into is a senseless enterprise. Soteriological explanations circumvent this problem by viewing nirvana as a practical therapeutic system whose aim is deliverance from suffering. Paul Masson-Oursell championed this approach when he concluded that the psychological effects of nirvana included those of enhanced creativity, freedom and a 'fecund autonomy'.[14]

Freud's comments indicate that he too saw nirvana as part of a therapeutic enterprise. This can be clarified by showing how Freud casts three interrelated aspects of the path of nirvana: 1) the interpretation of nirvana as insight into the unconscious; 2) the mental and emotional requirements demanded of the successful seeker-analysand; and (3) the role of the sage-therapist.

Concerning the first of these the text is clear. Freud states the following: 'nirvana is not nothingness, it is that which transcends all contradictions. It is not . . . a sensual enjoyment, but the ultimate in superhuman understanding, an ice-cold, all-comprehending yet scarcely comprehensible insight.' At first glance, this passage seems to indicate that Freud is admitting the existence of a metaphysical or transcendent realm. However, one must remember that as early as 1900, in his *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud equated the realm which transcended all contradictions with the unconscious.[15] In other words, here, as elsewhere, we see Freud beginning to read his emerging conception of the psyche into the more rudimentary, psychological apprehension contained in a classic text. Freud specifies the precise nature of the kind of insight into the unconscious gained through the experience of nirvana by referring to the 'awful depths' of the *Bhagavad Gita* in poetic terms: ' . . . "and still it lay beneath me hidden in purple darkness there", says Schiller's diver, who never returns from his second brave attempt'. The meaning of this literary reference is evident when one undertakes an analysis of the poem as a whole. There one finds a curious state of affairs: the condensation of oedipal with 'oceanic' imagery. Briefly summarized, *The Diver* portrays a young man who, on two successive occasions, undertakes the heroic task of grappling with the forces of a feared 'whirlpool', portrayed as an 'ocean womb' that 'boils and hisses . . . a gaping chasm . . . leading down to the depths of hell', in order to retrieve a king's goblet. Motivated by the king's blessing and his crown in return, the page dives into the gloomy depths, miraculously emerging:

Long life to the King! Let him rejoice
Who breathe up here in the roseate light!
For below all is fearful, of moment sad;
Let not man to tempt the immortals e'er try,
Let him never desire the things to see
That with terror and night they veil graciously.

Filled with amazement and curiosity, the king asks the page to return to the 'purple depths' to bring word to him of the mystery below. With the promise of his daughter's hand in marriage, the idealistic page once again enters the fateful whirlpool, never to return.

This powerful poem can be read as a metaphor for the psychoanalytic task. One 'dives' into the 'whirlpool' of the unconscious, a whirlpool inhabited by powerful and potentially dangerous powers. The theme of *The Diver* is an oedipal one: winning the favour of the king, gaining his daughter's hand in marriage only to eventually displace the king himself. Freud's citation of *The Diver* in the passage in question suggests that far from retreating from psychic reality the mystic diver goes where few dare to tread. Freud's reference to the 'ultimate in superhuman understanding' suggests that the mystic, unlike the page, succeeds in gaining insight into the deepest recesses of his unconscious.

As important are Freud's observations concerning the mental and emotional requirements needed to insure a successful outcome to the psychic surgery the mystic undertakes. Given the 'awful depths' of the *Bhagavad Gita* and the possibility of madness, Freud cautions Goetz that the enthusiasm and courage of the mystic diver must be subsumed under the guidance of the intellect. Once again there are literary references — to Matthew 12:34 and Dostoyevsky's *The Brothers Karamatzov* — which reveal a deeper, richer meaning to Freud's admonitions. The latter is of especial interest given that Freud later wrote a short psychoanalytic study of Dostoyevsky which centered around his oedipal struggles and his creative rendering of them in *The Brothers Karamatzov*. The figure of Dimitri, who Freud calls an 'impulsive sensualist' and around whom Dostoyevsky clusters the themes of unbridled passion, parricide and intellectual and moral weakness, is appropriately singled out for attention. Not so coincidentally, it is also Dimitri who utters 'head first, head over heels into the abyss' and who is later brought

to trial for the public demonstration of his patricidal urges. Once again, then, we see Freud conceptualizing the mystic path in terms of his budding metapsychology. Dimitri embodies what can happen to those who enter the abyss 'head over heels', who are given to what Freud called 'acting-out' over remembering and 'working-through'.

Contrasted to the figure of Dimitri is that of the poet-philosopher of the *Bhagavad Gita* who, as a seeker, knows the value of the intellect, and as therapist, the value of posing answers in the form of questions. Psychoanalytically rendered, Freud intimates that the Indian sages had arrived at the therapeutic wisdom which acknowledges the art of holding the tension between instructive guidance and trusting in the patient's ability to bring to conscious awareness the 'answers' that lie buried within him in a time-appropriate, ego-syntonic way. Insight, sublimation and working-through preponderate over acting-out. This rendering of mystical therapy recalls another system Freud was familiar with and compared favourably with his own, namely, the Socratic. Generally speaking, the fundamental tenets which guide the two systems of thought — the end (self-knowledge), the means (asking questions), the assumptions (the answers are within), and the form (dialogue) — are similar.[16] So too did Freud utilize Platonic concepts such as Eros, and similes such as that of the charioteer, to help convey the meaning of his own.[17] Given his classical training and evidence of his awareness of the scholarly debates surrounding the question of the extent of Indian influence on Plato, Freud's comments to Goetz suggest the former merged the two systems of thought, in so far as they both contained the same germinal element of truth, and then read the more detailed and precise empirical findings of psychoanalysis back into them.

The idea that Freud admired eastern mystics is unorthodox enough to raise questions about the authenticity of 'The Goetz Letters'. Perhaps one cannot assume that Goetz possessed sufficient integrity not to fabricate his recollections. Certainly it is possible that in the interval which lapsed between his meetings with Freud and the subsequent documentation of them that some degree of distortion took place. On the other hand, a distinction needs to be made between institutionalized religion, which incurred Freud's wrath, and those poets and philosophers,

some being associated with religious traditions, who Freud admired and found edifying. For Freud religion was, among other things, a means of social control which monitored sexual and aggressive tendencies. It created a worldview that pretended to completeness and infallibility and protected its epistemological assertions from encroachments by science. Such a worldview magnified guilt and shame, promoted a childish orientation towards reality, stunted the critical use of one's intellect and creativity and, on the group level, catered to intolerance, the 'narcissism of minor differences'.

It is this institutional form of religion and the masses it attracted (the 'common-man's religion') which Freud attempted to displace in cultural works like *The Future of an Illusion*. In that work Freud sought to create a social space for psychoanalysis by employing the rhetorical strategy of an interlocutor. The latter embodied the characteristics of the cultured elite, the 'brain-workers' and 'vehicles' of civilization, capable of being swayed by psychoanalysis but also by the more rational arguments of theology. By slowly convincing the interlocutor of the arguments made in behalf of psychoanalysis, so too did Freud hope to convince the cultural elite at large. As he once proclaimed in a letter to the Protestant lay analyst Oscar Pfister, certainly one of the figures behind the interlocutor of *The Future of an Illusion*, the latter was written to help replace religion with psychoanalysis, a profession he referred to as consisting 'of lay curers of souls who need not be doctors and should not be priests'.[18]

In contrast, the 'intuitive psychologists' were capable of having an unusual access to the unconscious and the talent to represent unconscious processes in symbolic, experience-distant ways. As Freud once wrote to the writer Arthur Schnitzler, 'whenever I get deeply absorbed in your beautiful creations I invariably seem to find beneath their poetic surface the very presuppositions, interests and conclusions I know to be my own'.[19] Artistic productions of all kinds could be therapeutic in providing an outlet for instinctual gratification and edifying when it stirred the imagination and ignited introspection. Thus conceived, poets and philosophers had a special relationship to psychoanalysis. They embodied the dramatic themes and tendencies of human behaviour, evinced in works like Hamlet and Oedipus Rex, from which Freud learned so much.

There is an undeniable tension here. Mystics, framed as intuitive psychologists, have more often than not been associated with the promotion of the kind of religious worldview Freud abhorred. On the one hand, mystics embodied subjective profundity; on the other, they were associated with the promotion of institutionalized religion — a cultural product Freud linked to childishness, regression and projection. This tension, evident in other texts, caused Freud no small difficulty, and it is questionable whether his attempt at resolution can be said to have achieved satisfactory closure. For example, in Chapter Five of *The Future of an Illusion*, Freud, attempting to ward off the 'desperate efforts' of philosophers and theologians to defend the legitimacy of religion, brings up the problem of mysticism:

> . . . the "credo quia absurdum" of the early Father of the Church . . . maintains that religious doctrines are outside the jurisdiction of reason — are above reason. Their truth must be felt inwardly, and they need not be comprehended. But this Credo is only of interest as a self-confession. Am I to believe every absurdity? And if not, why this one in particular? There is no appeal to a court above that of reason. If the truth of religious doctrines is dependent on an inner experience which bears witness to that truth, what is one to do about the many people who do not have this rare experience? One may require every man to use the gift of reason which he possesses, but one cannot erect, on the basis of a motive that exists only for a very few, an obligation that shall apply to everyone. If one man has gained an unshakable conviction of the true reality of religious doctrines from a state of ecstasy which has deeply moved him, of what significance is that to others?[20]

The defensive rationalizations and rhetorical questions which litter this passage can be read as a tacit admission that there may be some religious validity to the mystical experience. At the same time, Freud clearly indicates that such experiences are far too rare, subjective and inaccessible to reason to serve as a basis for the defense of institutional religion. In other words, mysticism was not the 'common-man's' religion. In the next chapter Freud returns to this topic, adding nuance to his rhetoric. He notes that mystical intuition is capable of providing insight into the unconscious: intuition can reveal 'particulars about our own mental life'. These particulars, however, are 'hard to interpret'.[21] Here, of course, lay the problem, for intuitive insight into the

unconscious cannot effect an automatic orientation to the external world. Rather, some mediating (interpretative) framework was needed, of which religion was one and psychoanalysis another. Freud thought philosophers and theologians would always interpret 'the particulars' gleaned through mystical intuition in ways which would legitimate a religious worldview. But the latter circumvented ego functions such as reality testing and adaptation in favour of appeals to wish-fulfilment and regression. The result of mystic intuition in the hands of theology, then, was the continued legitimation of religious institutions and its worldview, both of which served to heighten the 'unbehagen' ('unease' or 'discontent') in society and men.

One must be very careful, then, in providing the proper context for Freud's ruminations on particular aspects of any religion. Who he was talking to and what he felt was at stake must be taken into account. Only then do Freud's seemingly contradictory or unorthodox statements reveal their inner logic and true meaning. With respect to the present analysis, it is fair to conclude that 'The Goetz Letters' indicate that Freud considered Hindu scriptures like the *Upanishads* and the *Bhagavad-Gita* as genuine classics. The 'poets' of these texts were the eastern 'intuitive psychologists' of their time. On the other hand, as we shall see, when Freud felt that the social status of his 'secular cure of souls' was threatened, his response to those who defended the Hindu worldview was every bit as cutting as his more familiar onslaughts on Christianity and its theologians.

The Encounter with Romain Rolland

If 1923 saw the last of Freud's great metapsychological contributions, it also saw the birth of his correspondence with Romain Rolland, the French social critic, novelist, musicologist and mystic. Jones notes that it was the horrors of the Great War and Rolland's visible presence as mediator and 'conscience of Europe' during it that moved Freud to contact Rolland.[22] In his first letter to him, Freud exclaimed that being 'allowed to exchange a greeting with you will remain a happy memory to the end of my days. Because for us your name has been associated with the most precious of beautiful illusions, that of love extended to all mankind.'[23]

Freud was similarly enamored of Rolland's literary talent. From his correspondence we know he read Rolland's Nobel Prize winning work *Jean-Christophe*, plays like *Les Loups* and later works like *L'ame Enchantée*, citing the moments of exaltation and pleasure they had given him. For Freud, Rolland was an 'intuitive psychologist', the cultured man *par excellence*. In turn, Rolland praised Freud as the 'Christopher Columbus' of the mind, a tenacious advocate for the truth who had scientifically verified the introspective insights of philosophers and poets. Indeed, a perusal of their correspondence, which lasted until Freud's death in 1939, reveals that the two men canvassed a variety of topics, from politics and art to psychoanalysis and religion.[24] The latter two are of particular interest to us since it eventuated in Freud's interpretation of mysticism and the famous 'oceanic feeling' in the first chapter of *Civilization and Its Discontents*.

The debate over the oceanic feeling began in 1927 after Freud sent Rolland a copy of *The Future of an Illusion*. Rolland wrote back on 5 December 1927, praising Freud's 'lucid and spirited little book' but adding that he had missed out on the true source of religion, which consisted in a mystical feeling of oceanic contact with the universe. Freud's response has become the basis for the psychoanalytic interpretation of mystical experience. The oceanic feeling, as the received view would have it, is but the regression to the preverbal, preoedipal 'memory' of unity.[25] Certainly it is consistent with psychoanalytic theory to utilize elements of Freud's response for the interpretation of transient, mystical feelings of unity.[26] Nevertheless, when Freud's interpretation is contextualized with respect to his correspondence with Rolland, one finds that the first chapter of *Civilization and Its Discontents* was constructed around five letters, three from the pen of Rolland.[27] Placed within these five letters, the text of *Civilization and Its Discontents* reads quite differently. It reveals that Freud offered two models for the interpretation of two different mystical states, that he constructed these models in response to specific information he received in letters from Rolland, and that neither model accords with the received view. More important for our purposes, an analysis of this chapter in context reveals that Freud's analysis cannot be divorced from Rolland's researches into Indian mysticism. Indeed, as we shall see, echoes of Freud's earlier

encounters with Hinduism as catalogued in 'The Goetz Letters' resound throughout his debate with Rolland.

We may start our analysis by reproducing Rolland's letter to Freud of 5 December 1927. This crucial document contains the definitive description of the oceanic feeling and houses the numerous issues which form the unstated background of the chapter as a whole:

Dear and Respected Friend,

I thank you for being so kind as to send me your lucid and spirited little book. With a calm good sense, and in a moderate tone, it pulls off the blindfolding bandage of the eternal adolescents, which we all are, whose amphibian spirit floats between the illusion of yesterday and . . . the illusion of tomorrow.

Your analysis of religions is a just one. But I would have liked to see you doing an analysis of *spontaneous religious sentiment* or, more exactly, of religious *feeling*, which is wholly different from *religions* in the strict sense of the word, and much more durable.

What I mean is: totally independent of all dogma, all credo, all Church organization, all Sacred Books, all hope in a personal survival, etc., the simple and direct fact of *the feeling of the 'eternal'* (which could very well not be eternal but simply without perceptible limits, and like oceanic, as it were).

This sensation, admittedly, is of a subjective character. But as it is common to thousands (millions) of men actually existing, with its thousands (millions) of individual nuances, it is possible to subject it to analysis, with an approximate exactitude.

I think you will class it also under the *Zwangsneurosen*.But I have often had occasion to observe its rich and beneficent power, be it among the religious souls of the West, Christian or non-Christian, or among those great minds of Asia who have become familiar to me and some of whom I count as friends. Of these latter I am going to study, in a future book, two personalities who were almost our contemporaries (the first one belonged to the late 19th century, the second died in the early years of the 20th) and who revealed an aptitude for thought and action which proved strongly regenerating for their country and for the world.

I myself am familiar with this sensation. All through my life it has never failed me; and I have always found in it a source of vital renewal. In that sense, I can say that I am profoundly 'religious' — without this constant state (like a sheet of water which I feel flushing under the bank) affecting in any way my critical faculties and my freedom to exercise them — even if that goes against the immediacy of the

> interior experience. In this way, without discomfort or contradictions, I can lead a 'religious' life (in the sense of that prolonged feeling) and a life or critical reason (which is without illusion) . . .
>
> I may add that this 'oceanic' sentiment has nothing to do with my personal yearnings. Personally, I yearn for eternal rest; survival has no attraction for me at all. But the sentiment I experience is imposed on me as a fact. It is a *contact*. And as I have recognized it to be identical (with multiple nuances) in a large number of living souls, it has helped me to understand that that was the true subterranean source of *religious energy* which, subsequently, has been collected, canalized and *dried up by the churches* to the extent that one could say that it is inside the churches (whichever they may be) that true religious sentiment is least available.
>
> What eternal confusion is caused by words, of which the same one here sometimes means: *allegiance* to or *faith* in a dogma, or a word of god (or a tradition); and sometimes: a free *vital upsurge*.[28]

In this remarkable letter Rolland was signifying his status as a competitor in the arena of cultural analysis. Freud had written *The Future of an Illusion* to create a social space over against religion for psychoanalysis. *Civilization and Its Discontents* continued this agenda, for Freud meant the term 'unbehagen' in the original German title of the book to refer to the 'unease' caused by not only the ineradicable aspects of man's nature (notably the aggressive instinct) but to that caused by the structure of social institutions. Institutionalized religion, being essentially 'unpsychological', was just such an example. Rolland, on the other hand, wanted Freud's help to scientifically establish the benefits of mystical introversion. He claimed that oceanic feelings of unity were the true source of religion. Thus Rolland was careful to qualify the oceanic feeling with the argument of *The Future of an Illusion* in mind. The oceanic feeling was not opposed to reason, commensurate with wishful thinking or the desire for immortality. Further, it was dynamic, vitalistic, creative, socially adaptive and completely independent of the various accouterments of institutionalized religion. In short, the oceanic feeling was in every significant way of a different order than the religion of the common-man.

The kind of dialogue Rolland championed was not the psychology–theology dialogue — that arena of conversation which has dominated the psychoanalytic study of religion, being

traced back to *The Future of an Illusion* and men like Pfister, Paul Tillich, Erik Erikson and, more recently, William Meissner, Ana-Maria Rizzuto and others.[29] Rather, as seen in his letter to Freud of 5 December 1927, Rolland looked across cultures, pointing to the scholarly evidence he had amassed for a 'future study' of two Asian mystics. This is a clear reference to what were to become his famous biographies of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda. In those works Rolland championed what can be called the psychology–comparativist dialogue, one which he hoped would lead to the creation of a 'universal science-religion', a veritable mystical psychoanalysis.[30]

Unbeknownst to Freud, Rolland had already engaged in extensive relations with representatives of India. Rolland's first important contact with a representative of India came, he informs us in the opening pages of his journal *Inde*, in 1915 by way of an article entitled 'A New World Policy for India'.[31] The author, Ananda Coomaraswamy, had dedicated the essay to Rolland, arguing that East and West, each of which had developed different but beneficial cultural assets, needed to become equal partners and contributors in the creation of a new humanity. Upon reading the article Rolland noted in his journal that if he were granted ten or twenty more years to live, he would like to play a part in leading Europe to the 'high plateaus' Coomaraswamy dreamed about. 'There are a number of us in Europe', he was later to write in the Foreword to Coomaraswamy's *The Dance of Shiva*, 'for whom European civilization no longer suffices . . . (we) have had to confess its inadequacies and its limited arrogance. We few look towards Asia!'[32] The following year, a lecture given in Tokyo by Tagore had a similar effect on Rolland. Like Coomaraswamy, Tagore noted the importance and inevitability of the coming East–West dialogue. While applauding the scientific genius of the West, he warned of its materialism, militarism and imperialism and urged Japan, as a representative of the East, to keep its independence, integrity and humanism intact. With his inimitable dramatic flair, Rolland characterized the lecture as 'a turning point in the history of the world'.[33] By the end of the decade Rolland had established correspondences with both Coomaraswamy and Tagore. In the following decade, Rolland was to further his contacts with a variety of representatives of the East, including the biologist J.C. Bose, Professor Radhakrishnan,

various disciples of Aurobindo and Ramakrishna and, of course, a notable correspondence with Mahatma Gandhi.[34] 'The Unity of Europe and Asia', he wrote, 'must be, in the coming centuries, the most noble task of mankind'.[35]

Starting in 1915, then, and for the better part of the next two decades, Rolland engaged in a sustained effort to expose the riches of Indian culture to the West. The biographies of the Hindu saints belong to this period, as does Rolland's biography of Gandhi, his numerous articles and reviews extolling the culture and religious tradition of the East and attempts to establish an international university. Rolland held up the best of India's religious intellectuals and socio-political figures as models for the re-education of the West. A spirit of internationalism, not nationalism, was the path the future must take. Rolland put into operation in a number of cultural arenas his plan to promote international dialogue and cooperation. His attempt to create an 'intellectual international' (a voluntary association of the intellectual elite which was apolitical, free from the machinations of nationalism and promoted cooperation and equality between nations), the dissemination of Esperanto and the establishment of an international review dedicated to East–West issues were all examples of Rolland's universalistic and humanistic agenda.[36] In this Rolland was surely a man of his times, as is exemplified in the emergence of a host of social institutions from the League of Nations to the Olympics.

One can discern Rolland's moral and socio-political message creeping into his biographies of the Hindu saints. In the preface to the biography of Ramakrishna, Rolland recalled his past accomplishments as a social reformer: 'I have dedicated my whole life to the reconciliation of mankind. I have striven to bring it about among the peoples of Europe. . . . For the last ten years I have been attempting the same task for the East and West.'[37] Later in the same book, Rolland emphasized the need to reject western imperialism and the 'pre-eminence of one incomplete and partial civilization' in favour of the creation of a new humanity in which Asia and Europe, standing 'face to face as equals', could be fellow collaborators.[38] Both civilizations should learn to educate the other. In the preface to his biography of Ramakrishna entitled 'To my Western Readers', Rolland emphasized how his researches revealed a 'lofty system of thought, at once religious

and philosophic, moral and social, with its message for modern humanity from the depths of India's past'.[39] Europe could learn the virtues of 'quietness, patience, virile hope, serene joy'.[40] The East, on the other hand, could learn from the scientific and technological advances of the West and its proclivity to 'action'.[41] Rolland did not, however, fall prey to the claim that one civilization was accorded exclusive rights to certain aspects of human behaviour. At the bottom of all civilizations was Man: 'There is no East or West for the naked soul'.[42] Particular facets of human potentiality were developed over others in different lands due to varying geographic, socio-economic and political conditions. Europe, feeling the spiritual consequences of an all too rapid growth of industry and technology in an imperialistic, capitalistic society, had simply lost touch with virtues buried in its past but presently thriving in the East.

Rolland's conclusions concerning the nature of the mystical element in religion fit hand-in-glove with his cultural agenda. In his attempt to synthesize mysticism East and West he took as his starting point the two principle ideas behind Vedantic philosophy: the essential spirituality of life and the divinity of man.[43] He did not, to the chagrin of his Indian contacts, conceive of these ideas as the exclusive property of Indian philosophy or even give India primacy in their dissemination. Rather, the essential ideas of Vedantic philosophy could be found in other areas of the world, for example, in the pre-Socratic philosophy of Empedocles, the mysticism of Plotinus, Philo, Denis, and Eckhart, the poetry of Whitman and the transcendental movement initiated in early twentieth century New England by Thoreau and Emerson.[44] Vedantic philosophy merely catalogued what was a universal, innate feature of consciousness. The fundamental source of religion was dynamic in character, a free and vital becoming which, given the proper individual and social conditions, 'spontaneously' manifested itself and eventually solidified into discernible religious forms. As Rolland put it: 'mysticism is always and everywhere the same':[45]

> Now of all rivers the most sacred is that which gushes out eternally from the depths of the soul, from its rocks and sands and glaciers. Therein lies primeval Force and that is what I call religion. Everything belongs to this river of the Soul, flowing from the dark unplumbed reservoir of our being down the inevitable slope to the Ocean of the

> conscious, realized and mastered Being. . . . From the source to the Sea, from the sea to the source, everything consists of the same Energy, of the Being without beginning and without end. It matters not to me whether the Being be called God (and which God?) or Force. . . . Words, words, nothing but words! Unity, living and not abstract, is the essence of it all.[46]

It is also important to note that Rolland, as is indicated in his letter to Freud of 5 December 1927, was 'familiar' with oceanic feelings. 'Throughout my life', he states to Freud, 'I have always found in it a source of vital renewal'. Rolland catalogued these experiences in his autobiography, *Journey Within*, his *Mémoires*, and, most importantly, in a philosophical statement written during his twenties he entitled the 'Credo Quia Verum' (I Believe Because It Is true).[47] At the heart of this religion lay a number of mystical experiences Rolland identified as feelings of communion or identity with Nature. Ineffable and transformative, Rolland gave form to these experiences by combining the philosophies of Spinoza, Leibnitz and the pre-Socratics, the ethics of Tolstoy and his native Christianity.

But there was also evidence of influence from the East. Rolland's exposure to Indian culture as a youth at the famous Parisian École Normal Supérieure had been cursory but real. He read some of Eugene Burnouf"s studies on Indian philosophy and translation of the *Bhagavad Gita* and composed a notebook on 'le Bouddha Siddhartha'. These influences found expression in his Credo Quia Verum, where one finds sporadic references to Eastern doctrines like 'nirvana' and 'maya'.[48] Even this minimal exposure played no small part in his later, more extensive engagement with India. In a letter of 3 June 1930 to his Indian friend D.K. Roy, Rolland explicitly states the similarity between the experiences and philosophy contained in his Credo and that which he found in India: 'Now listen to my personal experiences. I find in Sri Aurobindo's Ishopanishad . . . just what I myself had found, unaided, at the age of twenty, when I wrote the same thing in my Credo Quia Verum.'[49] Indeed, in his biographies Rolland confirms this by stating that he was not a novice in the field of comparative mysticism; that nothing he saw in Indian mysticism was existentially alien for the spiritual experiences of his youth brought him 'singularly near to the spirit of India when I later came to know it'.[50]

Freud, Yoga and the Oceanic Feeling

When Freud finally set down to analyse the oceanic feeling in 1929, Rolland's biographies were still in process. All he had was Rolland's letter of 5 December 1927. Freud seems to have been genuinely mystified by Rolland's description of the oceanic feeling. In a letter to Rolland of 14 July 1929, which constituted his first response to Rolland's letter of 5 December 1927, Freud related how the oceanic feeling left him 'no peace' and in the text of *Civilization and Its Discontents* that its analysis, because it was not a feature of his own psychic life, had caused him 'no small difficulty'. However, like any informed intellectual and University Professor, Freud was acquainted with mystical literature if only in a general way. He had previously addressed, if briefly and inadequately, the noetic claims of mystical experience in works like *The Future of an Illusion* and 'The Goetz Letters'. So why did Rolland's oceanic feeling cause him such consternation?

Rolland's description of the oceanic feeling did not fit the portrait of the transient mystical 'experience' familiar to generations of scholars from James onwards. While Rolland's reference to the 'subterranean source' of the oceanic feeling points to the unconscious he also refers to the oceanic feeling as a 'constant state', a 'prolonged feeling' which exists alongside the 'critical faculties' without, despite its immediacy and constancy, interfering with their proper function. While we cannot go into it at length (I have treated this problem elsewhere),[51] suffice it to note that this was a real element of Rolland's mature mysticism, one which came to preponderate later on in his life. Freud seems to have taken it at face value for in his summary of Rolland's letter in *Civilization and Its Discontents* he characterizes the oceanic feeling as consisting 'in a peculiar feeling, which he himself is never without'. Freud's perplexity is understandable for the notion of a continuous mystical state would raise eyebrows even among most contemporary psychologists but not, I hasten to add, among scholars of the comparative study of mysticism, who have noted examples of such phenomenon in mystics like St. Teresa of Avila and Sri Ramana Maharshi.[52]

Freud begins his interpretation in the first chapter of *Civilization and Its Discontents* by admitting that the oceanic feeling was

recalcitrant to analysis. However, a psychoanalytic interpretation was possible if one seized the central 'ideational' content of the oceanic feeling, that of unity — 'the indissoluble bond of being one with the external world as a whole'. This understanding of the essential characteristic of the oceanic feeling stressed its state-like character over its 'subterranean' origin and thus mitigated any attempt to interpret it with respect to the unconscious. Rather, Freud employed a developmental perspective. First, Freud reasoned that an infant's sense of itself and the world is considerably more unitary than that of an adult:

> An infant at the breast does not as yet distinguish his ego from the external world as the source of the sensation flowing in upon him. He gradually learns to do so, in response to various promptings . . . originally, the ego includes everything, later it separates off an external world from itself.[53]

Freud then went on to claim that our own adult ego feeling can be conceived of as a 'shrunken residue' of this primary ego-feeling:

> Our present ego-feeling is, therefore, only a shrunken residue of a much more inclusive — indeed, an all-embracing — feeling which corresponded to a more intimate bond between ego and the world about it. If we may assume that there are many people in whose mental life this primary ego-feeling has persisted to a greater or less degree, it would exist in them side by side with the narrower and more sharply demarcated ego-feeling of maturity, like a kind of counterpart to it. In that case, the ideational contents appropriate to it would be precisely those of limitlessness and of a bond with the universe — the same ideas with which my friend elucidated the 'oceanic feeling'.[54]

The question, given the inevitable effect of the reality principle on self and other awareness, now became whether or not an early ego awareness of complete unity could indeed 'persist' through the various developmental stages leading up to adult maturity. This engaged the subject of the preservation of psychic contents within the mind. While admitting that 'the subject has hardly been studied as yet', Freud indicated that the results of psycho-analysis had concluded that 'it is rather the rule than the exception for the past to be preserved in mental life'. If this is the case, then one can assume that in many people this early ego-feeling

has indeed persisted alongside the adult ego. Thus concludes Freud, 'we are perfectly willing to acknowledge that the oceanic feeling exists in many people, and we are inclined to trace it back to an early phase of ego-feeling'.[55]

Freud offered a different line of analysis for what seems to be a distinct if related mystical phenomenon. The text in question occurs in the last paragraph of the first chapter of *Civilization and Its Discontents*. Here Freud has ended his discussion on the nature of the oceanic feeling and its connection with institutionalized religion and turns to a related aspect of the mystical life:

> Another friend of mine, whose insatiable craving for knowledge has led him to make the most unusual experiments and has ended by giving him encyclopaedic knowledge, has assured me that through the practices of Yoga, by fixing the attention on bodily functions and by peculiar methods of breathing, one can in fact evoke new sensations and coenaesthesias in oneself, which he regards as regressions to primordial states of mind which have been long ago overlaid. He sees in them a physiological basis, as it were, of much of the wisdom of mysticism. It would not be hard to find connections here with a number of obscure modifications of mental life, such as trances and ecstasies. But I am moved to exclaim in the words of Schiller's Diver:
>
> 'Let him rejoice who breathes up here in the roseate light!'[56]

One cannot help but note the very real difference between this mystical phenomenon and the oceanic feeling. In describing the latter Freud had emphasized the enduring feeling of connection with the outside world. The unitive, statelike character of the 'oceanic feeling' demanded resource to a pre-oedipal model of development and the theory of the preservation of psychic contents. In the above passage Freud speaks of mystical practices (yoga), of ecstasies and trances, and of the regressive descent into 'primordial states' for the purpose of achieving a particular kind of wisdom. The description is far more like the transient mystical 'experience' elaborated by William James. Freud's reference to 'another friend' is also of interest. Who did Freud have in mind and what significance might this friend have for ascertaining the nature and interpretation of this new mystical phenomenon?

Strong evidence can be amassed to indicate that this 'friend' was none other than Rolland. This becomes clear when one takes a closer look at the remaining letters surrounding the

creation of *Civilization and Its Discontents*. To review, the first letter of this series was Rolland's letter of 5 December 1927. Then over two years later, on 14 July 1929, Freud responded, telling Rolland of a work, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, which lay 'still uncompleted' before him. He had written an introduction to the work consisting of an analysis of the 'oceanic feeling' and wondered whether Rolland would give him permission to use his personal remark in a public forum. Three days later, Rolland wrote granting his permission and added:

> I should only acknowledge that being at a distance of one year and a half, I no longer remember very exactly the text of my letter. I was then no doubt at the beginning of my long studies on the Hindu mind, which I am going to publish in a few months, in three volumes devoted to 'Mysticism and action in living India'. Since 1927 I have been able to delve deeply into that 'oceanic sentiment', innumerable examples of which I find not only among our contemporary Asians, but also in what I might call the ritualistic and multi-secular physiology which is codified in treatises on *Yoga*. . . .
>
> At the end of my work, while reading, for comparison, some of the great mystics of Europe and particularly those of the Alexandrian epoch, those who lived in the West during the 14th century — not to speak of the considerable work of Abbé Brémond on French mysticism during the 16th and 17th centuries — I was surprised to observe, once again, that it is not at all true that the East and the West are two worlds separated from each other, but both are the branches of the same river of thought. And I have recognized in both the same 'river ocean'.[57]

Immediately upon receipt of Rolland's letter, Freud, on July 20th, returned Rolland's letter of 5 December 1927 to him and, while thanking him for his permission to use the letter in *Civilization and Its Discontents*, asked him to review it and make any changes if he so desired. He closed the letter by once again exalting Rolland:

> How remote from me are the worlds in which you move! To me mysticism is just as closed a book as music. I cannot imagine reading all the literature which, according to your letter, you have studied. And yet it is easier for you than for us to read the human soul![58]

Four days later, on July 24th, Rolland returned his letter of 5 December 1927 to Freud and affirmed that it still reflected his views on mysticism. He thought Freud distrusted mysticism out

of a respect for upholding the integrity of 'critical reason'. Citing Heraclitus ('The harmony between the opposing forces is that which is the most beautiful'), he added that he was able to participate in both the 'intuitive' and 'critical' functions of the mind without conflict.[59]

This exchange of letters demonstrates the affinities which abound between the 'another friend' Freud mentions in *Civilization and Its Discontents* and Rolland. Both have wide ranging interests, a love for the truth, encyclopaedic knowledge, and most significantly, are interested in yoga, mystical practices and the physiological basis of mysticism. Of especial interest is Rolland's distinction between the 'critical' and 'intuitive' functions of the mind and the correlation of the latter with mysticism. The reference to 'intuition', which for Freud always meant insight into the inner world, must have recalled Rolland's stress on the 'subterranean source' of mysticism in his letter of 5 December 1927 and solidified the impression that he was speaking about transient experiences as well as continuous mystical states. The portrait Freud paints of this other friend, then, could be a composite of two or more people, of which one was Rolland, or it could be an elaborated version of the information contained in Rolland's letter. In either case, it seems likely that Rolland's letter inspired Freud to append the story about this other friend and his researches into yoga at the end of Chapter One. After all, Freud did say in his letter to Rolland of July 14th that *Civilization and Its Discontents* was as yet unfinished. Further, Rolland's initial response was written a scant three days later. Since the book was not sent to the publishers until November of 1929, Freud had plenty of time to amend the text as he saw fit.

The question now concerns the interpretation of this mystical 'experience', the regression into the depths of the psyche. Freud characterizes it simply with words from Schiller's *The Diver*. Commentators who have noted this passage have dismissed it as another example of Freud's rhetorical skill, signifying his aversion to phenomena refractory to psychoanalytic investigation and indicative of his preference for the 'light' of rational consciousness.[60] But Freud never used a literary reference without some particular intention. Moreover, in 'The Goetz Letters' we have seen this poem used in conjunction with Indian mysticism. There as here, this powerful poem can be read as a metaphor for the

psychoanalytic task. One 'dives' into the 'whirlpool' of the unconscious in order to retrieve 'particulars' of mental ideation.

This line of argument is buttressed and given further nuance in a famous passage at the end of Chapter Eight — a chapter which for all intents and purposes signals the end of Freud's argument in *Civilization and Its Discontents*. As a way of summing up how the conflicting aims between civilization and individuals lead to an unbearable sense of guilt, Freud, after quoting a phrase from Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*, goes on to say:

> and we may well heave a sigh of relief at the thought that it is nevertheless vouchsafed to a few to salvage without effort from the whirlpool of their feelings the deepest truths, towards which the rest of us have to find our way through tormenting uncertainty and with restless groping.[61]

The imagery of this passage — garnering the deepest truths from the 'whirlpool' of one's feelings — is reminiscent of *The Diver*. It further seems that Freud intended us to make such a connection for this is the only place in the *entirety* of his written corpus that he uses the term 'whirlpool' to designate the unconscious.[62] The immediate referent is Goethe, who 'without effort' (the German is *mühelos*) arrived at the 'deepest truths' which the 'rest of us' arrive at only through 'restless groping'. However, Freud's reference to 'the few' extends the meaning from a single writer, Goethe, to a group, what we have called intuitive psychologists. In fact, it is this *very* passage which inspired Ernst Kris to coin the phrase 'intuitive psychologists'.[63] As we have noted, the latter was a group of poets and philosophers like Goethe, Schiller, Shakespeare, Nietzsche, Plato and others who Freud admired and idealized. Rolland, as we have seen, belonged to this group. Freud, using language reminiscent of the passage under consideration here, confirms this in his letter to Rolland of 20 July 1929. Speaking of Rolland's researches into mysticism, he refers to Rolland, the poet-mystic, as being able to 'read the soul' more easily than 'us', i.e., psychoanalysts (the German reads: Und dabei konnen Sie doch in der menlichen Seele lesen *müheloser* als wir).[64]

The Debate Continued

When Rolland read *Civilization and Its Discontents* in late December of 1929 he wrote to Stefan Zweig that it was he who had

spurred Freud on to his interpretation of the 'oceanic feeling'. Rolland complained to Zweig that Freud's analysis lacked precision and breadth and neglected the adaptive and beneficial aspects of mysticism.[65] Undoubtedly with this thought in mind, Rolland sent Freud a copy of his biographies of the Hindu saints immediately upon publication in early January. Each man now had the other's views on the psychology of mysticism firmly in hand, a state of affairs which led to the continuation of their debate.

Freud received Rolland's biographies at the outset of 1930. He must have also read them at once for just past the middle of January he replied to Rolland's biographies. He offered his

> warm thanks for the gift of your twin-headed, three-volume work! [adding] I shall now try with your guidance to penetrate into the Indian jungle from which until now an uncertain blend of Hellenic love of proportion, Jewish sobriety, and philistine timidity have kept me away. I really ought to have tackled it earlier, for the plants of this soil shouldn't be alien to me; I have dug to certain depths for their roots. But it isn't easy to pass beyond the limits of one's nature (*Letters: 292–3*).

Characteristically, Freud then went on to reiterate his views on mystical intuition — views continuous with ones we have noted earlier. 'Your mystics rely on it to teach them how to solve the riddles of the universe', states Freud. 'We believe that it cannot reveal to us anything but primitive, instinctual impulses and attitudes — highly valuable for an embryology of the soul when correctly interpreted, but worthless for orientation in the alien, external world'. Freud finished the letter by claiming that he was not 'an out-and-out skeptic. Of one thing I am absolutely positive: there are some things we cannot know now'.[66]

Freud returned to Rolland and his Hindu mystics in his *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (1933). It is of especial interest in so far as it occurs as part of one of the most quoted passages within the Freudian corpus. It appears at the end of Lecture 31, where Freud, by way of summing up his discussion of the division of the psyche into the ego, id and super-ego, states:

> It is easy to imagine, too, that certain mystical practices may succeed in upsetting the normal relations between the different regions of the mind, so that, for instance, perception may be able to grasp

> happenings in the depths of the ego and in the id which were otherwise inaccessible to it. It may safely be doubted, however, whether this road will lead us to the ultimate truths from which salvation is to be expected. Nevertheless, it may be admitted that the therapeutic efforts of psycho-analysis have chosen a similar line of approach. Its intention is, indeed, to strengthen the ego, to make it more independent of the super-ego, to widen its field of perception and enlarge its organization, so that it can appropriate fresh portions of the id. Where id was, there ego shall be. It is a work of culture — not unlike the draining of the Zuider Zee.[67]

While this text does not overtly refer to Rolland, strong evidence exists which supports the argument that Freud wrote this text with Rolland in mind. Certainly it confirms Freud's previous views on mystical intuition. Further, if one looks closer, one finds that the grammatical structure of the psychoanalytic 'motto' (where id was, there ego shall be) and its qualification with respect to the 'draining of the Zuider Zee' indicate that Freud intended it to carry a deeper meaning, one which was directed to Rolland and displays his thorough command of the written word and broad humanistic training.

With respect to the qualification, Bettelheim has pointed out that while the draining of the Zuider Zee was a technical achievement, Freud chose to refer to it not as 'Urbarmachung', which is the proper German term to denote the reclamation of land for agriculture, but as 'Kulturabeit' i.e., a work of culture or 'labour to achieve culture'. He adds that Freud's choice of this metaphor is significant for it recalls the last two acts of Goethe's *Faust*.[68] Briefly put, the essence of the latter consists in Faust's renouncing his more youthful and grandiose attempts at harnessing the meaning of the universe and his place in it in favour of the seemingly more limited goal of the reclamation of land from the sea for the purpose of creating a working community beneficial to himself and humankind as a whole. It is this more limited and Faustian sense of 'reclaiming the soul' that expresses the humanistic meaning behind the psychoanalytic motto. Now we have already seen that Rolland utilized the ocean-river metaphor in depicting mysticism in his biographies of the Hindu saints. We have also alluded to Freud's condensation of oedipal and oceanic imagery as well as the figures of Rolland and Goethe in his remarks on Schiller's *The Diver*. We can now add that when Freud

sent a copy of *Civilization and Its Discontents* to Rolland, he did so with the dedication 'from the Landtier to his great Oceanic Friend'.[69] These observations have a direct relation to the imagery from Faust. Freud undoubtedly equated Rolland's promotion of mystical intuition with Faust's striving for the meaning of all things. Psychoanalysis, like the more mature Faust, promoted the value of the more limited but practical and attainable task of reclaiming land from the sea, of helping the ego in its attempt to mediate between the id and the external world. What psychoanalysis strove for was not simply insight, but renunciation, sublimation, structure building. In short, psychoanalysis was that interpretative and cultural science which endeavored to make people more civilized and civilization more human. In contrast, mystical practices may be able to grasp deep 'happenings' in the ego and id, but this did not necessarily translate into enlarging the organization of the ego or appropriating portions of the id. On the contrary, in the interpretative hands of religion, mystical insight served merely to heighten individual and social dis-ease.

The subtle meaning behind Freud's alteration of the grammatical structure of the psychoanalytic motto fits hand-in-glove with the above analysis. In the German, the motto reads, 'Wo Es war, soll Ich werden'. Missing from Es and Ich are the definite articles. Rhetorically, this has the effect of elevating Es and Ich into archetypes. The use of 'werden' (to become) and 'soll' (must, shall be) now become tinged with a definite and deliberate religious meaning. Indeed, it recalls the creation imagery of Genesis and the imperative language of Exodus. By intentionally using religious language in a ironic way and in referring to Faust and Rolland, Freud was once again juxtaposing the contrasting agendas of psychoanalysis and religion.[70] In this, then, the most famous of psychoanalytic one-liners, Freud had in mind not simply a generalized audience. He was thinking of and speaking directly to Romain Rolland and his Hindu mystics.

Freud's 'Mystical Experience' on the Acropolis

Freud returned to the problem of Hindu mysticism in 1936. The occasion was Rolland's seventieth birthday, for which Freud had been asked to contribute. Freud responded by first refusing, citing his advanced age and inability to produce, then finally agreeing

by sending Rolland an 'open letter', his magnificent essay, 'A Disturbance of Memory on the Acropolis'.[71] Freud's effort, which consists of a piece of self-analysis, has been characterized as consisting of multiple layers and multiple meanings, like 'a crystal which refracts at different angles' the entire range of Freud's fantasy life.[72] Given this, the Acropolis essay has understandably been the object of many psychoanalytic studies which have treated it as an entry into the deeper recesses of Freud's unconscious.[73] Unfortunately, most of the studies that have analysed the 'open letter' have failed to note its relation to Rolland's biographies of the Hindu saints.[74]

In order to understand this essay as a direct response to Rolland's biographies we must backtrack a bit, for this was not the first time Freud had referred to his experience on the Acropolis. That occurs in Chapter 5 of *The Future of an Illusion*, in the midst of a discussion on the contrasting epistemological claims of religion and science. Freud begins the passage by observing that while both religion and science initially require belief in their assertions about the nature of reality, only science gives us the means to confirm that belief for ourselves. The simplest of these 'means' is the 'self-evident' truth of our senses:

> Let us take geography. We are told that the town of Constance lies on the Bodensee. A student song adds: 'if you don't believe it, go and see.' I happen to have been there and can confirm the fact that lovely town lies on the shore of a wide stretch of water which all those who live around it call the Bodensee; and I am now completely convinced of this geographical assertion.[75]

Freud then goes on to relate an unusual experience the above example 'reminded' him of which occurred a generation earlier:

> In this connection I am reminded of another, very remarkable, experience. I was already a man of mature years when I stood for the first time on the hill of the Acropolis in Athens, between the temple ruins, looking out over the blue sea. A feeling of astonishment mingled with my joy. It seemed to say: 'So it really *is* true, just as we learnt at school!' How shallow and weak must have been the belief I then acquired in the real truth of what I heard, if I could be so astonished now! But I will not lay too much stress on the significance of this experience; for my astonishment could have had another explanation, which did not occur to me at the time and which is of a wholly subjective nature and has to do with the special character of the place.[76]

An observation can be made about this passage which is directly relevant to our analysis of Freud's 'open letter' to Rolland. One cannot help noting the resemblance between the language Freud employs in describing his experience on the Acropolis and those which pervade phenomenological descriptions of mystical experiences. Freud states that it is not an ordinary but a 'remarkable' experience in which preponderated elements of 'joy', 'astonishment' and a sense of reality. Jones reports that soon after his visit to the Acropolis Freud related to Marie Bonaparte that the experience on the Acropolis ' . . . had surpassed anything he had ever seen or imagined' and that ' . . . the amber-colored columns of the Acropolis were the most beautiful things he had ever seen in his life'.[77] So too are the images of water and maternal warmth reminiscent of the images and symbols utilized by mystics. Surely these associations reveal why it is Freud picked this particular experience to analyse for Rolland. It was, in effect, the closest analogy to mysticism he could find within the realm of his experience. In this respect one should not overlook the fact that Freud's depiction of his 'geographical location' — in the domain of Athena overlooking the blue sea — bears a striking thematic resemblance to the pre-oedipal imagery and analysis he was to render of Rolland's 'oceanic feeling' three years later.[78]

Turning now to Freud's 'open letter' to Rolland in 1936, the major aim of this self-analytic session was to explain what he called a 'feeling of derealization', a feeling which led to a disturbance or falsification of memory. Freud prefaced his remarks by stating how every year during his vacation he was in the habit of traveling with his brother Alexander to some location on the Mediterranean Seaboard. In 1904, Freud planned on visiting Corfu, a Greek island, by way of the Italian port of Trieste. Upon arriving in Trieste, however, they were advised, on account of the bad weather in Corfu, to visit Athens. Freud remarks that this possibility, which opened the way for the fulfilment of a long standing wish, should have brought feeling of pleasure. Instead, it caused a depressive and irresolute frame of mind which continually cast doubts on the feasibility of such a trip.

Once on the Acropolis, a feeling came over Freud that moved him to exclaim: 'So all this really does exist, just as we learnt at school!' In contrast to his analysis of this utterance in *The Future*

of an Illusion, Freud then goes on to posit that the utterance involved a 'splitting of the ego' between the 'person' who made the remark and the 'person' who took cognizance of the remark. Whereas the first person was astonished at the actual existence of the Acropolis, the second person was astonished that the existence of the Acropolis had ever been the subject of doubt. Freud notes that in his schoolboy days doubt had indeed been associated with the Acropolis. That doubt, however, pertained not to the existence of the Acropolis but to whether he would ever have the opportunity to see it with his own eyes. Somehow a disturbance or falsification of memory had taken place. Freud reasons that such a disturbance could have taken place only if while on the Acropolis he had a 'feeling of derealization'; that upon arriving on the Acropolis a momentary and not altogether conscious feeling had been engendered which, had it been translated into conscious thought, would have been expressed as follows: 'What I see here is not real.' It was the attempt to keep this thought from coming into conscious awareness through repression that accounted for the falsification of memory — the displacement of doubt from seeing the Acropolis onto its actual existence.

This analysis, of course, left unexplained the unconscious forces that provoked the feeling of derealization. To this explanation we will momentarily attend. First, however, let us note the significant alterations between Freud's account of the Acropolis episode above and that given in *The Future of an Illusion*. Most crucial in this regard is why it is that Freud changed his emphasis from joy, astonishment and a sense of 'reality' to 'derealization' and 'unreality'. A clue to the answer can be gleaned from Freud's discussion of another set of mental phenomena, the most prominent being 'déjà vu', which he regards as the positive counterparts of derealizations. Freud then goes on to state: 'A naively mystical and unpsychological attempt at explaining the phenomena of déjà vu endeavours to find evidence in it of a former existence of our mental self'. The reference is, quite clearly, to the Indian doctrine of reincarnation. Similarly, to make explicit what is implied in the text, the phenomena of derealization, the sense of the unreality of the world, would become the experiential basis for the essentially mystical doctrine of maya. Significantly, both of these doctrines received play in Rolland's biographies of

the Hindu saints. It is here, then, that we arrive at the true motive behind Freud's emendation of his account of the episode on the Acropolis. Freud wished to emphasize, as he had in *The Future of an Illusion* with respect to Western religion, the psychoanalytic understanding of the origin of some of the cardinal tenets of Eastern religion and the value of such a worldview for adaptation or 'orientation' to the external world.

Freud characterized a derealization with the German word 'Empfindung' (sensation, feeling), which is the same German term he had used to characterize the 'oceanic feeling'. And, like the oceanic feeling, Freud sought a psychoanalytic explanation for this 'mystical experience'. Emphasizing the oedipal, Freud argued that his fervent wish to see the Acropolis was tied in with the wish to overcome his father — a wish that invariably brought with it feelings of guilt:

> But here we come upon the solution to the little problem of why it was that already at Trieste we interfered with our enjoyment of the voyage to Athens. It must be that a sense of guilt was attached to the satisfaction of having got so far: there was something about it that was wrong, that was from the earliest times forbidden . . . It seems as though the essence of success were to have got further than one's father, and as though to excel one's father were something still forbidden.[79]

At Trieste, the fulfilment of the wish was still only a possibility and the depression a symptom of the unconscious oedipal conflict. On the Acropolis, possibility had become actuality, and the reality of success, which brought with it intense conflict and guilt, was overwhelming. An equal attempt had to be made to defend against the reality of success, namely, that of derealization — 'what I see here is not real'. Thus it is that Freud endeavoured to show the superior interpretative power of psychoanalysis and the danger in mistaking a feeling of derealization, or a déjà vu for that matter, as an indicator concerning the true nature of Reality. The 'oceanic feeling' was 'used' by religion as a means of consolation and a way of seeking to restore a sense of limitless narcissism. Derealizations, however, became the experiential basis for the doctrine of maya, a doctrine which, if taken as an accurate account of the nature of reality, could justify passivity, fatalism, self-absorption and withdrawal from the world.

This was not Freud's only foray into the psychological dis-ease created by Eastern religious worldviews. In a rumination which was at least in part inspired by Rolland, Freud, in the opening pages of the second chapter of *Civilization and Its Discontents*, drops his supposedly value-neutral clinical stance in order to address the philosophical problem of the purpose and meaning of life. This, he states, stands and falls with the problem of happiness. The question is how, given the tendencies, capacities and limits of man's nature, we can best fulfil the programme of the pleasure principle. Freud eventually argued for a general position which stressed the value of work, being loved and loving others. Indeed, 'to love and to work', like the psychoanalytic motto, has become but another famous one-liner representing accumulated Freudian wisdom. However, along the way to his conclusion Freud considered and then dismissed a number of other 'prescriptions', many of them religious, for Freud thought that religion stood and fell with the question of happiness. It is in this context that his reflections on the 'wisdom of the East' can be found.

Freud begins the passage under consideration by noting that due to the diverse internal and external circumstances of individuals, there is no one particular path which can be prescribed for all. Indeed, one can find a variety of paths offered by diverse schools of thought. Many schools, in acknowledgment of the limits and suffering imposed on us by biology, psychological constitution, relations with others and external nature, define happiness less in positive terms than in the modified and negative sense of avoidance of pain, unpleasure, suffering and unhappiness. A good example of such a path is that of the hermit who, finding his greatest source of suffering in his dealings with others, adopts the plan of 'voluntary isolation'. Other schools point to our internal life as the origin of our suffering and seek to master or control the instincts. The path 'prescribed by the worldly wisdom of the East' combines these latter two 'schools' of thought. It recommends that one 'kill off the instincts' and withdraw from active social life and the community of men. Its ideal, then, is that of the religious ascetic and the 'technique' in its service is yoga. Like psychoanalysis, then, the 'therapeutic' technique of yoga was inexorably bound up with culture, in this case the mystical Eastern religious worldview. However, in contrast to Rolland's assertions

Freud thought that any psychological insight garnered through yoga would not result in greater social adaptation or individuality but something like a permanent 'liminal' state, an erasure of personal and social history. As such, yoga, inexorably bound up with the 'worldly wisdom of the East', was really in the service of the 'death instinct', of quiescence and simplicity, a state Freud would correlate with the 'nirvana principle'.

Therapy East and West

Surveying the works of pivotal figures in the psychology of religion during its formative period (1880–1930), one finds no dearth of engagement with eastern religions. Jung's researches into Buddhism, Taoism and Hinduism and James's inclusion of mystical texts from the East in his *The Varieties of Religious Experience* are well known.[80] Other lesser works, classics in their own right, similarly engaged the comparative study of mysticism. For example, the Jesuit psychologist Joseph Maréchal included an essay dealing with psychology and the comparative study of mysticism in his *Studies in the Psychology of the Mystics.*[81] The Canadian psychologist R.M. Bucke used texts from Buddhism and biographies of Ramakrishna to illustrate examples of what he liked to call 'cosmic consciousness'.[82] The Swiss psychologist Ferdinand Morel devoted an entire section of his *Essai sur L'-Introversion Mystique* to oriental mysticism. The latter is of particular interest to us since Rolland, in his effort to engage western psychologists on issues concerning the meaning and interpretation of mysticism, devoted a sizable appendix to a critique of Morel's position.[83] One can find similar references in the works of other researchers in both the United States and on the continent, such as James Leuba and Franz Alexander.[84]

Given this, alongside the pervasiveness and intrigue of the oriental renaissance, we should not be surprised that Freud, perhaps the most pivotal theorist of this period of the psychology of religion, came to reflect on Hinduism. Indeed, in retrospect, perhaps we should have come to suspect the traditional omission of anything smacking of the orient in surveys of Freud's psychology of religion. I have dug to certain depths to remedy this state of affairs. There may yet be other buried texts and correspondences which would cast further light on this matter.

The evaluation of Freud's interpretative forays is an altogether different issue. Certainly his conclusions were ruled in part by the state of comparative studies of his day and in part by his own lack of expertise. Philosophers, theologians and even other psychologists would take issue with his cursory treatment of contested issues in mystical epistemology. On another level, anthropologists might call attention to the various ways Freud's interpretation reflects western values, conceptions of development and visions of reality. Psychoanalysis is an ethnoscience, a fact no better illustrated than Freud's encounter with Hinduism. On the other hand, his reflections on doctrines like reincarnation (viewed as a cultural container for repressed issues of childhood), the equation of maya with states of derealization and the rendering of mystical techniques along therapeutic lines are, properly qualified, psychologically astute. But these issues, deserving as they are of detailed discussion, must be left for another time.

Notes

1. See T.C. Sinha, 'The Development of Psychoanalysis in India', in *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 47 (1966): 427–39; Christiane Hartnack, 'Vishnu on Freud's Desk: Psychoanalysis in Colonial India', in *Social Research*, 57, 4 (1990): 921–49. With respect to his correspondence with Bose, Freud, bent on the international dissemination of psychoanalysis, extended to Bose a cordiality which sufficed to mask what at times was an unsympathetic attitude. As he commented to Ferenczi after visits by Tagore and an Indian philosophy professor late in 1926: 'My need of Indians is for the present fully satisfied' (Jones, *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 3 [New York: Basic Books, 1957], p. 128).
2. Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* in *S.E.* 18: 58. All references to *S.E.* are to *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, translated and edited by James Strachey. 24 volumes (New York and London: The Hogarth Press, 1964).
3. See G. Papini, 'A Visit to Freud', in *Review Existential Psychology and Psychiatry*, 9, no. 2 (1969): 130–34. To the playwright Lenormand, Freud commented that 'the essential themes' of psychoanalysis 'were based on the intuitions of the poets' (see

H. Ellenberger, *The Discovery of the Unconscious* [New York: Basic Books, 1970], pp. 460, 467).

4. See Ernst Kris, *Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art* (New York: Shocken Books, 1952), pp. 22–3.
5. See P. Gay, *Freud: A Life for Our Times* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1988), pp. 36, 137, 166–7, 533; E. Jones, *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 1 (New York: Basic Books, 1953), pp. 55, 340; *The Letters of Sigmund Freud*, ed. by E. Freud (New York: Basic Books, 1960), letters no. 115, 117, 118, 165.
6. See Raymond Schwab, *The Oriental Renaissance*, translated by Gene Patterson-Black and Victor Reinking (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984). The term 'oriental renaissance' was the title of a chapter in Egar Quintet's 1841 work, *Genie de Religions.* Schwab traces the origin of the term back to Ferdinand Eckstewin and, before him, Friedrick Schlegel (see Chap. 10).
7. 'Erinnerungen an Sigmund Freud', in *Neue Schweitzer Rundschau*, 20 (1952): 3–11. There are two English translations. The one I have utilized is: 'That is all I have to say about Freud: Bruno Goetz's Reminiscences of Sigmund Freud', in *International Review of Psychoanalysis*, 2 (1975): 139–43. The other translation can be found in *Annual of Psychoanalysis*, 10 (1982): 281–91.
8. Goetz, 'That is all I have to say about Freud: Bruno Goetz's Reminiscences of Sigmund Freud', p. 139.
9. Ibid.
10. G. Welbon, *The Buddhist Nirvana and Its Western Interpreters* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1968).
11. Ibid., p. 59.
12. Ibid., p. 27.
13. Ibid., Chaps. 2, 7.
14. Ibid., pp. 59, 190–1.
15. See Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, *S.E.* 5: 596. Freud thought contrary wishes and thoughts capable of existing exist side by side without conflict in the unconscious. In this sense, the unconscious is 'beyond contradiction'.
16. I would like to thank Bob Kaplan of Harvard University for making this clear to me.
17. See Freud, *The Ego and the Id* (*S.E.* 19: 25) and *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (*S.E.* 18: Chap. 4). See also

Oskar Pfister 'Plato als Vorläufer der Psychoanalyse', in *International Zeitschrift für Psychoanalyse*, 7 (1921); Max Nachmansohn, 'Freuds Libidotheorie verglichten mit der Eroslehre Platos', in *Internationale Zeitschrift für Psychoanalyse*, 3 (1915); Gerasimos Santas, *Plato and Freud* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1968).

18. Sigmund Freud, *Psychoanalysis and Faith: Dialogues with the Reverend Oskar Pfister*, ed. by E. Freud and H. Meng (New York: Basic Books, 1963), p. 126.
19. E. Freud (ed.), *The Letters of Sigmund Freud*, pp. 339–40.
20. Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, *S.E.* 21: 28.
21. Ibid., pp. 31–2.
22. E. Jones, *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud*, 3: 97.
23. E. Freud, *Letters*, pp. 341–2.
24. For an in-depth analysis of the letters which passed between Freud and Rolland, see Part One of my *The Enigma of the Oceanic Feeling: Revisioning the Psychoanalytic Theory of Mysticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).
25. See for example Daniel Mekur, 'Unitive Experiences and the State of Trance', in B. McGinn and M. Idel (eds), *Mystical Union and Monotheistic Faith*, pp. 129–30.
26. See for example Prince and Savage, 'Mystical States and the Concept of Regression', in *The Highest State of Consciousness*, J. White (ed.) (Garden City, New Jersey: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1972); Ralph Hood, Jr., 'Conceptual Criticisms of Regressive Explanations of Mysticism', in *Review of Religious Research*, 17, no. 3, Spring 1976, p. 184.
27. The precise dates are: Rolland to Freud 5 Dec. 1927; Freud to Rolland 14 July 1929; Rolland to Freud 17 July 1929; Freud to Rolland 20 July 1929; Rolland to Freud 24 July 1929. For these letters see my *The Enigma of the Oceanic Feeling*.
28. See F. Doré and M. Prévost (eds), *Selected Letters of Romain Rolland* (Delhi: Oxford, 1990), pp. 86–8.
29. See Paul Tillich, *The Courage to Be* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952); Erik Erikson, *Young Man Luther* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1958); William Meissner, *Psychoanalysis and Religious Experience* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984); Ana-Maria Rizzuto, *The Birth of the Living God* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979).
30. See Notes 2 and 3 at the end of Rolland's *The Life of Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1988).

31. Rolland, *Inde* (Paris: Éditions Vineta, 1951).
32. Foreword, Ananda Coomaraswamy, *The Dance of Shiva* (New York: The Sunrise Turn, 1924), p. i. See also Rolland, *The Life of Vivekananda*, p. 293.
33. See Rolland, *Inde*, 9–12. Coomaraswamy's article appeared in *The New Age*, 24 Dec. 1915 and Tagore's in *The Outlook*, 9 Aug. 1916. The fact that the reference to these two articles comprise the first two entries in Rolland's journal *Inde*, which is well over 400 pages and spans the years 1915–1943, confirms their importance for Rolland's turn to the East.
34. See *Inde* for his correspondence with Coomaraswamy. Rolland's correspondence with Tagore can be found in A. Aronson and K. Kripalani (eds), *Rolland and Tagore* (Calcutta: Visva-Bharati, 1945). Interesting reflections and references on Sri Aurobindo can be found in the French edition of *The Life of Vivekananda*, entitled *Essai sur La Mystique et l'action de L'Inde Vivante: La Vie de Vivekananda* (Paris: Librairie Stock, 1939) in the appendix ('Le Réveil de L'Inde après Vivekananda'). For Rolland's correspondence with Gandhi, see *Cahiers Romain Rolland*, vol. 19 (Paris: Éditions Albin Michel; 1969) and Rolland's biography of Gandhi, *Mahatma Gandhi: The Man who became One with the Universal Being* (New York: The Century Co., 1924).
35. Letter, Rolland to Tagore, 11 June 1923, in *Rolland and Tagore*, 43. Rolland's correspondence with Tagore also reveals his attempts to establish an international university and East-West journal.
36. See Fisher, *Romain Rolland and the Politics of Intellectual Engagement* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1988), Chap. 4. Rolland's efforts to establish an international review were only partially realized in the journal *Europe* (see W. Starr, *Romain Rolland: One Against All* [Paris: Mouton, 1971], Chap. 13).
37. Rolland, *The Life of Ramakrishna* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1965), p. 4.
38. Rolland, *The Life of Vivekananda*, pp. 287–90.
39. Rolland, *The Life of Ramakrishna*, p. 8.
40. See Rolland's introduction to Coomaraswamy's *Dance of Shiva*.
41. See especially Note 3 in Rolland, *The Life of Vivekananda*.
42. Rolland, *The Life of Ramakrishna*, p. 9.
43. Rolland, *The Life of Vivekananda*, part 2, Chap. 4.

44. See Rolland, *The Life of Vivekananda*, Chap. 4 and note 3.
45. Ibid., p. 348, fn. 1.
46. Rolland, *The Life of Ramakrishna*, p. 7.
47. Rolland, *Journey Within* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1947); *Mémoires et fragments du Journal* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1956). For Rolland's Credo, see *Cahiers Romain Rolland* (Paris: Éditions Albin Michel, 1952), vol. 4.
48. See Starr, *Romain Rolland: One Against All*, p. 196; Doré and Prévost (eds), *Selected Letters of Romain Rolland*, p. ix. In his journal at the École Normale, Rolland cited how his friends dubbed him 'the musical Buddha of a revolutionary mysticism' (*Cahiers Romain Rolland*, 4: 323).
49. D.K. Roy, *Among the Great* (Bombay: N.M. Tripathi, Nilanda Publications, 1945), pp. 71–3. A similar statement can be found in Rolland's journal *Inde*, pp. 43–4.
50. See Rolland, *The Life of Ramakrishna*, pp. 5; 10–11; *The Life of Vivekananda*, pp. 176–7. Also, see p. 176, fn. 2.
51. See Part Two of my *The Enigma of the Oceanic Feeling*.
52. For example, Teresa's concept of a 'spiritual marriage', in *The Interior Castle* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), VII, 2; Sri Maharshi's concept of *sahaja samadhi* (see Arthur Osborne, *Ramana Maharshi and the Path of Self-Knowledge* [New York: Samuel Weiser, 1973], p. 204). Interestingly enough, these concepts are used to describe late or mature phases of the mystical life.
53. Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, *S.E.* 21: 66–7.
54. Ibid., p. 68.
55. Ibid., p. 72.
56. Ibid.
57. Doré and Prévost (eds), *Selected Letters of Romain Rolland*, p. 95.
58. E. Freud, *Letters*, p. 389.
59. For the entirety of this letter, see my *The Enigma of the Oceanic Feeling*.
60. See, for example, Fritz Wittels, 'A Neglected Boundary of Psychoanalysis', *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, 18 (1949): 44–59; Fisher, 'Sigmund Freud and Romain Rolland: The Terrestrial Animal to his Great Oceanic Friend', p. 27; James Dicenso, 'Religion as Illusion: Reversing the Freudian Hermeneutic', in *Journal of Religion*, 71, no. 2 (1991): 174.
61. Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, *S.E.* 21: 122.

62. As is catalogued in S. Guttman, R.L. Jones, S.N. Parish (eds), *The Concordance to The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (New York: International Universities Press, 1984).
63. Ernst Kris, *Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art* (New York: Shocken Books, 1952), pp. 22–3.
64. For Freud's original letter, see E. Freud (ed.), *Briefe 1873–1939* (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fisher, 1968).
65. Letter of 30 Dec. 1929 in *Romain Rolland/Stefan Zweig Briefwechsel*, 2 vols (Berlin: Rütten und Loening, 1987), 2: 348–9.
66. E. Freud, *Letters*, pp. 292–3.
67. Freud, *New Introductory Lectures*, *S.E.* 22: 181.
68. Bruno Bettelheim, *Freud and Man's Soul* (New York: Vintage, 1982), pp. 61–4.
69. See David Fisher, 'Sigmund Freud and Romain Rolland: The Terrestrial Animal and His Great Oceanic Friend', in *American Imago*, 33 (1976): 1–59.
70. I wish to thank Professor Samuel Jaffe of The University of Chicago for alerting me to the grammatical structure and religious significance of what I have referred to as the psychoanalytic motto. He is, of course, not responsible for any errors I may have made by interpreting it with respect to the Freud-Rolland correspondence.
71. The German title reads as follows: *Brief an Romain Rolland (Eine Erinurungsstörung auf Akropolis)*.
72. See Maynard Solomon, 'Freud's Father on the Acropolis', *American Imago*, 30 (1973): 142–56; William Niederland, 'Freud's "Déjà Vu" on the Acropolis', *American Imago*, 26 (1969): 373–8.
73. See Solomon, 'Freud's Father on the Acropolis', pp. 143–5 for an indication of precisely how varied the perspectives employed and theories generated have been.
74. The only exception I know of to this is J.M. Masson and T.C. Masson, 'Buried Memories on the Acropolis: Freud's response to mysticism and anti-Semitism'. In their attempts to formulate a general theory of mysticism they conclude that Freud saw mystical phenomena as defenses against deeply repressed traumatic memories and that the paper on the Acropolis attempted to articulate that view. My analysis differs in both intent and content, seeking as I do to contextualize the 'open letter' more specifically with respect to Rolland's biographies.

75. Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, *S.E.* 21: 25.
76. Ibid.
77. Jones, *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 2 (New York: Basic Books, 1955), p. 24.
78. Two other studies have briefly noted the connection between this passage and Freud's correspondence with Rolland: Mark Kanzer, 'Sigmund Freud and Alexander Freud on the Acropolis', in *American Imago*, 26 (1969): 346 and Irving Harrison, 'On Freud's view of the Mother-Infant Relationship and of the Oceanic Feeling — some Subjective Influences', in *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, 27 (1979): 417–19.
79. Freud, 'A Disturbance of Memory on the Acropolis', *S.E.* 22: 247.
80. See Jung, *Psychology and the East*. Translated by R.F.C. Hull (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978); W. James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York: The Modern Library, 1902).
81. J. Maréchal, *Studies in the Psychology of the Mystics* (Albany: Magi Books, 1964).
82. R.M. Bucke, *Cosmic Consciousness* (New York: The Citadel Press, 1993).
83. F. Morel, *Essai sur L'Introversion Mystique* (Geneva: Kundig, 1918). For Rolland's critique, see note 2 in *The Life of Vivekananda*.
84. James Leuba, *The Psychology of Religious Mysticism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1926); F. Alexander, 'Buddhistic Training as Artificial Catatonia', in *The Psychoanalytic Review*, 18, no. 2 (1931): 129–41.

3

Vishnu on Freud's Desk: Psychoanalysis in Colonial India*

Christiane Hartnack

Among Freud's Greek, Roman, and Egyptian statues, a cobra-headed ivory carving of Vishnu stands out. It is not earth-coloured but white, not an antique and not Mediterranean. It was sent to Freud by the Indian Psychoanalytical Society on the occasion of his seventy-fifth birthday, and he gave it 'a place of honor' on his desk, to symbolize the 'proud conquest it [psychoanalysis] has made in foreign countries'.[1] This was Freud's view then. Now, from a distance of over sixty years, this statuette also stands for the story of a failed attempt at an intercultural exchange about psychoanalytical concepts.

The objective of this paper is to describe the early reception of psychoanalysis in India, and to present Freud's attitudes towards his followers in the first non-Western country where a psychoanalytical society was formed. While central psychoanalytical techniques like the method of free association and dream analysis were applied in British India, it will be shown that psychoanalysis as a therapeutic method and as a cultural theory was not easily received in a culture with philosophical and scientific traditions, religious beliefs, myths, and cultural mores quite distinct from those of Central Europe.

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Instead of the nuclear father-dominated family that Freud and his patients took for granted, for example, the early Indian psychoanalysts and their clientele grew up in joint families with several mother and father figures, where complex communication patterns with varying kinds of power over and emotional importance for the child prevailed.[2] Further, the formative cultural images often linked with family dynamics in psychoanalytic theory were quite different in these two settings. Androcentric monotheistic representations, as in Judaism and Christianity, are found only among Indian Moslems. India's Hindu majority adheres to a polytheistic pantheon and gives goddesses an important role in it.

The different gender constellations in the two cultures also played a complicating role. Freud developed his concepts to a great extent on the basis of therapeutic interactions with educated, urban, middle-class women. The early Indian psychoanalysts' clientele, on the other hand, was almost entirely male. There were political reasons for this. Psychoanalysis in India began in a colonial setting; Western-educated urban men had primary access to such imports. The Indian patients thus belonged to that section of society that was closest to the foreign colonizers. This meant that they were at the same time confronted with Indian and British cultural values and behavioural norms. Required to adjust to cultural standards which defined them as inferior, even effeminate, early Indian psychoanalysts and their patients found a way out of their particular situation by using imported psychoanalytical methods to assert their own cultural identity. In contrast to Freud's claims for the universality of his concepts, Indian psychoanalysts affirmed their cultural particularity. Thus a closer look at their work and Freud's reactions to it presents a unique opportunity to learn more about the explicit and implicit cultural assumptions of classical psychoanalysis.

The Indian Psychoanalytical Society

At the Seventh International Psychoanalytical Congress in Berlin in 1922, Ernest Jones introduced the new member association in the following words:

> I have the pleasure of announcing that an Indian Psychoanalytical Society has been formed in Calcutta under the presidency of Dr Bose and with a membership of twelve. As the lines on which this Society

> was organized showed remarkable care, and as we were familiar with Dr Bose's knowledge of psycho-analysis from an excellent book he has written, we decided to accord to this Society the provisional acceptance as a constituent branch of the Association. . . .'[3]

A connection formed in student days at Oxford University is partly responsible for the fact that the rather obscure Indian Psychoanalytical Society was recognized by the International Psychoanalytical Association even before the French one. The superintendent of the European Mental Hospital in Ranchi, Bihar, between 1919 and 1934, Owen Berkeley-Hill, was an old friend of Jones and an early supporter of psychoanalysis. Encouraged by Jones, he had already joined the American Psychoanalytical Society in 1911, and the British (then called London) Psychoanalytical Society in 1913. From 1910 onward, Berkeley-Hill also published occasional articles about psychoanalysis in the *Indian Medical Gazette*.[4]

Although this friendship aided the recognition of the Indian society, the actual motor behind its formation was a Bengali medical doctor and psychologist, Girindrasekhar Bose. Bose, who had obtained his medical degree at the University of Calcutta in 1910, had come in contact with psychoanalytical publications not through Berkeley-Hill, but as a result of his early interest in hypnosis. He claimed that he had treated patients in his psychiatric practice with psychoanalytic methods since 1909. In 1915, he joined the newly founded Department of Psychology at Calcutta University, where he also taught psychoanalysis from 1917 onward as lecturer in clinical psychology. He soon gathered around him a group of interested students, colleagues, relatives, and family friends who discussed psychoanalytic publications in the spacious home of the well-to-do Bose joint family. One participant in these meetings described the atmosphere around 1920 as follows:

> There was a Club at 14 Parsibagan, the Calcutta residence of the Bose brothers, an *Adda* in Bengali would be a more fitting term, for it was bound by no formal rules and regulations. Among its members could be counted many great names, artists, poets, journalists, historians, literateurs, medical men, psychologists and scientists. It was known as the Arbitrary Club, but we called it *Utkendra Samiti* in Bengali which being rendered into English would read as the Eccentric Club. Along with tea, chess and cards, members would hold

> discussions on all possible subjects under the sun. . . . The atmosphere of the Club was at that time surcharged with the electric current of psychology and literature.[5]

In this group, Bose also discussed his dissertation in psychology, *The Concept of Repression*, which he completed in 1921. As will be shown in the following section, in this, as in later publications, he blended Bengali Hindu thought with Freudian concepts.[6]

On 22 January 1922, Bose founded the Indian Psychoanalytical Society. In the course of the first year of its existence, the membership rose to fifteen. Among them were seven medical doctors, five of whom were in the Indian Medical Service, part of the British military. Another seven were psychologists, five from the Department of Psychology at Calcutta University and one each from Patna and Dacca. The remaining member was a Bengali businessman. Two members (Berkeley-Hill and R.C. McWatters) were British army officers.[7]

When Bose wrote to Jones to request the recognition of this group in Calcutta as a member of the International Psychoanalytical Association, Jones must have felt a certain ambivalence. Most participants at these meetings had shown more interest in than commitment to psychoanalytical work, and Jones viewed those few among them who had published on psychoanalysis with a certain skepticism. In a review of *The Concept of Repression*, he had said that Bose laid 'especial and unwonted stress on the tendency to polarity in the human mind'.[8] Moreover, as his correspondence with Freud shows, he had questioned the psychoanalytic value of Berkeley-Hill's writings. On 25 November 1920, for example, Jones wrote to Freud in regard to Berkeley-Hill's article, 'The Anal-Erotic Factor in the Religion, Philosophy and Character of the Hindus':

> It is a pity that Berkeley-Hill is not better, but I should be sorry to refuse it altogether, for he is very sensitive and I asked him to write it for the Journal (he is a close personal friend of mine); also one should remember that he has done much for PSA in India and made a serious financial sacrifice to help the Press in its early days.[9]

Berkeley-Hill's financial support was not limited to the Psychoanalytic Press. As Vincent Brome points out in his biography of Jones, he referred rich Anglo-Indian patients, like jewellery dealers, to Jones.[10]

In 1922, Jones invited Bose to join the editorial board of the *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*.[11] This, however, appears to have been a symbolic gesture, as Bose left few traces in this journal. In the thirty-two years that the name Girindrasekhar Bose remained on the changing list of editors, he contributed only one article to that journal.[12] Bose had also planned to publish a selection of seventeen of his essays with Hogarth Press, but this attempt remained as unsuccessful as Freud's request that he revise his most substantial article, 'A New Theory of Mental Life', for publication in the *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*.[13] There is no indication as to why he did not do so. One reason might have been his inhibition about publishing in English. Bose justified this by saying that 'if my works are of any worth, . . . they will be translated by the foreigners in their languages. No Englishman will write his work in Bengali for the benefit of the Bengalee'.[14] He was not alone in this respect. His Indian colleagues, too, wrote little for that journal. Only the British members of the Indian Psychoanalytical Society, Berkeley-Hill and Claud Dangar Daly, published several articles in the *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* and attended some of the congresses of the International Psychoanalytical Association. In this regard, they functioned as a kind of transmission belt between the European and the Indian psychoanalysts.

Though Indian psychoanalysts were hardly visible internationally, they gained influence in India. In the 1920s, psychoanalysis was much talked about among the Western-educated Bengali elite in Calcutta. Access to the media helped considerably to spread Freudian concepts, propagating psychoanalysis even through radio broadcasts and magazine articles.[15] The membership of the Indian Psychoanalytical Society rose to thirty-five, fifteen members and twenty associations, in 1934; by 1945, the membership was seventy, sixteen members and fifty-four associations. Associates were those members of the society who had no intention of practicing psychoanalysis, and who did not undergo a training analysis.[16]

As elsewhere in the mid-twenties, the question of lay analysis was discussed in Calcutta. Although the society's most active members were all MDs, it was decided that psychologists and others could also be licensed as practicing psychoanalysts, provided they had been accepted as candidates and trained according

to the society's statutes.[17] In 1932, the Indian Psychoanalytical Society formally opened the Indian Psycho-Analytical Institute. With this came the requirement that candidates had to complete a minimum of two hundred sessions of personal analysis before analysing at least two cases of one hundred sessions each under the guidance of either Berkeley-Hill or Bose. Candidates had to read the available psychoanalytical literature in the society's library (located in Bose's residence), and also had to attend Bose's lectures on abnormal psychology at the Department of Psychology in Calcutta University. From 1933 onward, the Indian Psychoanalytical Society was in charge of an outpatient clinic at the Carmichael (now R.G. Kar) Medical College and Hospital, and in 1940, one of Bose's brothers donated a small mental-health facility with a few beds, the Lumbini Park Mental Hospital, to the Society.[18]

The Indian Psychoanalytical Society also tried to establish its own journal. This was, however, only realized in 1947. Until then, the members of the Society published mostly in the *Indian Journal of Psychology*. When *Samiksa* first appeared as the society's official publication, India had gained independence, which meant that the members from Dacca and Lahore were no longer included. In 1953, Israil Latif, then the most active psychoanalyst in the newly founded Republic of Pakistan, started the *Journal of Psychoanalysis* there. However, only four issues appeared, mainly because he emigrated to Britain and there was no one left to coordinate such activities. *Samiksa* is still published, and the Indian Psychoanalytical Society's headquarters continues to be at 14, Parsibagan Lane, the house that still belongs to the Bose family. However, even more remarkable than these architectural reminders of his work, and the traces of Bose's organizational skills in the formation of the first non-Western psychoanalytical society, are his contributions to psychoanalytical theory.

Bose's 'Indianization' of Psychoanalytic Therapy

The core of Bose's psychoanalytical theory is that he ascribed to wishes an essential duality. In his view, a conscious wish is always accompanied by the opposite, subconscious one. There are other oppositions as well; for example, one wish is passive and the other active, or one is object-related and the other subject-related. Thus

a conscious wish to hit another person, which is active and object-related, is associated with a repressed, unconscious subject-related wish to be hit oneself.[19] According to Bose's theory, such wishes have no biological base as the Freudian 'drives' do, and they cannot be sublimated, but continue to exist until fulfilled.[20]

Bose consulted *pandits* (Brahmin priests) to gain a better understanding of Sanskrit texts containing psychological insights. These efforts resulted in the publication of his own translation of a Yoga text (Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*), several essays on Hindu psychological knowledge, and frequent references to ancient Indian wisdom in his general psychoanalytical writings.[21] It is thus not surprising that his psychoanalytical theory mirrored Hindu spiritual and philosophical principles. For example, he did not perceive individuals as essentially isolated from other individuals and in conflict with the outer world and within themselves, but as potentially united with other human beings, animals, plants, and nature. This essential bond as part of a unity between subject and object makes it possible for the patients to identify with the objects of their wishes, that is, to imagine what it is like to be hit, or to be of the opposite gender.[22]

An example may clarify the resulting therapeutic approach. 'Case No. 441' suffered, among other problems, from impotence. Based on the patient's free associations, Bose analysed this as an expression of 'a wish to be female'. He then assigned to the patient a kind of homework — to imagine himself as a woman and to try to develop a woman's sexual desires. Once the patient succeeded in this assignment, Bose asked him to shift back to a man's perspective, and then back to a woman's, and so on, until he was relieved of his symptoms. This indicated to Bose that the patient did not have to suppress his 'wish to be female' any longer. Psychoneurosis, according to Bose, is the result of a conflict between repressing and repressed wishes, and the essential task of the psychoanalyst is to liberate these repressed forces.[23]

Bose placed great emphasis on nuances of the Bengali language. All his analyses were conducted in the patients' mother tongues (in most cases Bengali), and in this language he made a full transcript of patients' associations, which he compared with later associations, thereby also noting down grammatical changes, for example from the passive to the active, or the use of double negatives, as in 'not that I do not love my wife'.[24] He claimed

that only by writing down all associations that patients came up with was he able to discover the existence and importance of opposite wishes. He noticed further that symptoms connected with a repressed element in the unconscious would not disappear even when they had been made conscious by analysis and the patient had accepted the interpretation. Based on this observation, he developed the so-called see-saw method which provided patients with the opportunity to express or even live out both aspects of the wish.[25]

Bose not only differed from Freud in regard to the fundamental cultural and philosophical assumptions underlying his psychoanalytical method, but he also questioned some of Freud's psychological claims directly. For example, he found no evidence for castration fears among his Indian patients. In fact, Bose did not mention 'penis envy' at all. A discussion of this notion of Freud's was not relevant for him, as he did not treat many women, and those few whom he saw appear to have been European. However, he insisted that 'a wish to be female' was very common among his male patients.[26] Considering the setting in Calcutta in the 1920s and 1930s, such claims could be seen in sociological terms as a desire to belong to the *Zenana*, the separated female world, a world imagined to be all Bengali, untouched by the stresses and conflicts induced by foreign rulers. Bose's therapy can thus be interpretated as a kind of man-to-man interaction intended to establish a masculine identity in an environment where, in the public sphere, British officials ridiculed Indian men for being effeminate, and men were dominated at home not only by their elder male relatives but also by their powerful mothers.[27]

Bose's version of the resolution of the Oedipus conflict also reveals a pattern quite different from Freud's. In Bose's view, the conflict between son and father is resolved not by the son's succumbing to the father's authority but, on the contrary, by the son's ability to overpower, that is, castrate him:

> I do not agree with Freud when he says that the Oedipus wishes ultimately succumb to the authority of the super-ego. Quite the reverse is the case. The super-ego must be conquered and the ability to castrate the father and make him into a woman is an essential requisite for the adjustment of the Oedipus wish. The Oedipus [conflict] is resolved not by the threat of castration, but by the ability to castrate.[28]

This 'feminization' of the superego, too, might be related to differences in the sociocultural settings from which Freud's and Bose's views derived. The 'superego' for Bose and his clientele related to authorities within the joint family, as well as to the imposed colonial structure. The 1920s, when Bose formulated his ideas about the resolution of the Oedipus complex as a reversal of the colonial relationship, coincided with the height of the Indian civil-disobedience movement against British rule. Although Bose himself was not a prominent participant in that movement, members of his family actively supported the struggle for independence.[29] The minutes of the Indian Psychoanalytical Society state, further, that members discussed a psychoanalytical publication by Berkeley-Hill with Mohandas Gandhi, which shows that at least in the mid-1920s contacts existed between some members of the Indian Psychoanalytical Society and the organized anti-British movement.[30]

Photographs of Bose always show him in Bengali garb. The image that one gets from these, from letters, obituaries, interviews with people who knew him, and last, but not least, from his publications, is that of a moderate Bengali nationalist, who combined the flair of a *Guru*, that is, spiritual teacher, with the authority of the doctor of science and the Western-trained medical doctor that he actually was. Even members of the Indian Psychoanalytical Society spoke of him as their *Guru*.[31] Those who knew Bose personally pointed out that there was a radiance about him that helped him to establish a rapport with patients immediately. He was not a real *Guru*, and his patients knew it. They came to him convinced that his access to the latest Western knowledge could cure them. Thus they flocked to his practice as individuals, not as a select group from a joint family, and they agreed to Bose's therapeutic terms, no matter how strange they appeared to be. Yet they were not completely alien. As Bose was one of them, and related to conceptual essentials of their own culture, they accepted psychoanalytic techniques such as free association and dream interpretation more easily.

Indian Cultural Interpretations with Psychoanalysis

In this section I will leave the historical reconstruction of psychoanalysis in British India and move to a topical presentation of

some central issues. The focus here is on three questions about which there were considerable differences between European and Indian psychoanalytic writings: colonial politics, religion, and oedipal themes.

Colonial Politics and Psychoanalysis

Late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Indian literature, especially in Bengal, which was colonized the longest, portray problems of the political and psychological situation in colonial India in great detail. For example, *Gora* by Rabindranath Tagore, an often-cited novel, depicts the psychological problems of assimilation to the foreign ruling class.[32] Even the title *Gora* (one of fair complexion) is a derogatory term for white man or European; as a person's name, it stands for the tensions in combining the indigenous with the colonial world. Against this cultural and literary backdrop, it is not surprising that at the height of anticolonial tensions, in the 1920s and 1940s, respectively, some Indian psychologists and psychoanalysts also focused their attention on political issues.

In 1923, Bose's definition of mental disease, for example, specifically exempted anticolonial political activism:

> If we assert that whatever is against the preservation of [the] individual is a diseased condition, we are confronted with the same type of difficulty. The sense of morality and duty often leads us to self-destructive actions, e.g. the feeling of the patriot and martyr.[33]

Haridas D. Bhattacharya's later essay, 'India's Psychological Reaction to the War', applied Bose's theory of opposite wishes to India's perception of Britain's involvement in World War II.[34] In his view, the political situation showed the existence of opposite wishes. On the one hand, Indians wanted Britain to be destroyed in the war, but they were ambivalent about this desire, as their victory would also be a chance to get something out of England, since Indians had supported Britain on the antifascist side.

An extremely cynical critique of psychoanalysis in light of the political situation was expressed by V. Narvane:

> In the great Bengal famine of 1943, thousands of children underwent the most harrowing experiences. They ate from dustbins for weeks on end, and wallowed among the corpses of their own parents. . . . It is

not unlikely that a psychoanalyst, following the orthodox Freudian tradition, might explain the dustbin as a symbol of the female genital.[35]

As India's independence came nearer, clashes among Indian Hindus and Moslems replaced those between Indians and the British colonizers. In 1947 and 1948, the *Indian Journal of Psychology* became a forum for various cultural-theoretical reflections. Some publications, like a series of essays entitled 'The Psychology of Culture Conflict', also dealt with deeper structures of the mind. D.M. Datta, one of the authors, described the colonized Hindu as a split personality whose European and indigenous ideas were locked up in two different compartments — wearing the Hindu's sacred thread beneath the Western tie. He concluded that this dual orientation had the effect that Hindus imitated a lot but assimilated very little, and that the imitations were not logically linked up with preexisting ideas but that European ideas and indigenous ones are locked up in two 'logic-tight compartments'. In Datta's view, this dual orientation caused by the repression of one culture by another produces psychopathological phenomena found in individuals. In extreme cases of cultural repression, there may be 'social insanity'. Datta's intention was not only to show how cultural clashes led to individual and social conflicts, but he had therapeutic recommendations as well. These included understanding the roots of the conflicts as well as reeducation.[36]

The colonial situation in India was not only analysed from an Indian perspective; there were also scattered publications by the British colonial officers who were members of the Indian Psychoanalytical Society on this theme. Daly used the nationalist symbolism of fighting to save the 'mother/land' from rape by Muslim and British conquerers in a racist and paternalistic essay entitled 'The Psychology of Revolutionary Tendencies'. Daly concluded that Indian political activists like Gandhi suffered from the basic psychological problem of not accepting the father's — that is, British — authority, and that all they wanted was to return to the pre-Oedipal symbiosis with the mother. But 'the golden land of plenty', like 'his happiness at his mother's breast, "the cow of plenty", is no more'.[37] His recommendation to the British government was to act like wise parents, who themselves constitute a bridge over which their children may be guided into adult life. In

his article 'Hindu Muslim Unity', the one which was discussed with Gandhi, Berkeley-Hill also made suggestions for psychological solutions of serious political problems at that time. Like Daly's suggestions, these were remote from political realities. Berkeley-Hill argued that the core of the problem between Hindus and Moslems is that the Hindu totem animal, the cow, is slaughtered by Muslims, after 'Mother India', the Indian soil, was conquered by them. He therefore proposed that 'any reconciliation between Hindus and Muslims would demand as a cardinal feature some form of ceremonial in which cows would be killed and eaten, either actually or symbolically, by Hindus and Muslims in conclave'.[38]

These publications show an interesting disparity in the psychoanalysts' gaze in the colonial situation. The work by Indians leaves out an explicit perspective on the colonizer; although they internalized colonial rule, they remained concerned about themselves, and did not objectify the British rulers. Berkeley-Hill and Daly, on the other hand, made Indians the objects of their psychoanalytical reflections, but reflected neither on themselves nor on the psychological situation of the British population in India. This is all the more remarkable as the treatment of colonial madness was Berkeley-Hill's professional career; he worked with British patients in the European Mental Hospital in Ranchi. In fact, both groups instrumentalized psychoanalysis, each in its own way. Indian or British reality, identity and pride were the static elements; psychoanalysis was functionalized, and at times changed, to give evidence of this.

Religion and Psychoanalysis

Another important cultural difference between continental Europe and British India was that religion as a separate realm did not exist in Hinduism, as there was no movement of secularization. In striking contrast with Freud and most other Western psychoanalysts, their Indian colleagues did not express any distinctly antireligious attitudes. On the contrary, they identified positively with their religion, and some Indian intellectuals who were basically sympathetic to Freudian concepts rejected psychoanalysis as incompatible with their religious beliefs. Specific examples of this came to light at a meeting in Calcutta on 13 December 1939, to pay homage to Freud after his death. One of

the twenty-one speakers there, S.C. Chatterjee, criticized psychoanalysis as a product of monotheistic Judeo-Christian cultural traditions with one-sided gender projections toward the deity. 'So far as these godless religions [Buddhism, Jainism, and Advaita-Vedantism] are concerned', he concluded, 'Professor Freud's theory has no application, since none of them can be characterized as a Father religion. . . .'[39] Another participant at that meeting, C.N. Shah, pointed to a further dimension of difference between India and the West. For him, the notion of the cyclic rhythms of cosmic activity, in which the individual life is but a tiny part, was incompatible with the this-worldly concepts inherent in Freudian thought:

> . . . according to Indian philosophy [,] life took its origin from the infinite life, and in the end it merges itself into the infinite life. It originated from beyond the state of this individualized life and it will return to a state beyond the individualized existence. . . . Freud states what he has to say about death instinct for this one life only; he does not believe in the wheel of rebirth; while Indian philosophy defends its position by assuming the existence of rebirths.[40]

Other Indians did not reject psychoanalysis out of hand but tried to combine psychoanalytic concepts with Hinduism. An example is Sarasi Lal Sarkar's article, 'A Study of the Psychology of Sexual Abstinence from the Dreams of an Ascetic'.[41] In this, he presented the dreams of a nineteen-year-old who had become an ascetic after his father's death, and who projected his filial as well as homosexual feelings onto his *Guru*. Gossain, a well-known Indian *Guru* in the late nineteenth century, had asked this young man to keep a diary of his dreams and show it to him. Sarkar had obtained both the dream diary and a transcript of the *Guru*'s dream interpretations, and argued in this article that Gossain had already made use of dreams as a way to the unconscious long before Freud did. He did not mention, however, that the respective goals were different. Whereas Freud used dream interpretations to help the patient gain insights into his or her unconscious to improve the individual's mental health, Gossain used his access to the *Chela*'s (disciple's) unconscious to help him on his spiritual path.

In the article, 'Hindu Family and Freudian Theory', Banerjee also argued that psychoanalysis provides scientific proof that

Hinduism is superior to other religions. After giving examples of the absence of repression in Hindu children, especially in weaning practices, he wrote that 'in the orthodox type of the Hindu joint family conditions obtain which are in consonance with the mental hygiene tenets of modern Freudians'.[42] Hinduism, however, goes beyond adequate childrearing. Banerjee placed his view of Hindu life into a larger, transpersonal perspective which smoothed 'the angularities of individuals in every direction'.[43]

Given the importance of religious activities in the lives of Indians, and their differences from Christian imagery and rituals, it is not surprising that the British members of the Indian Psychoanalytical Society, Berkeley-Hill and Daly, also tried to analyse Indian religious functions. The issues they claim to have uncovered range from the symbolism of the goddess Kali as a manifestation of the Hindu's castration fears to the 'neurotic' Hindu personality structure and Mohammed's father complexes.[44] These publications have in common that, by portraying Indians' religious expressions as childish and neurotic, they concluded that the psychological maturity of Indians is inferior to that of Europeans. This in turn helped to justify colonial rule. As I have pointed out in another article, these writings by British members of the Indian Psychoanalytical Society contributed to stabilizing existing colonial structures.[45]

If British members of the Indian Psychoanalytical Society expressed such anti-Hindu views, we may understand the Indian's desire to search for ways of praising their religion as a way of defending their cultural identity. This continues in postcolonial, contemporary India. Kakar, for example, presents a view of religious healers, not as enemies, but as colleagues of psychoanalysts.[46]

Oedipal Themes

A wide range of views on the Oedipus complex can be found in Indian literature. Narvane radically denounced the oedipal conflict as the product of a particular historical development in Western culture that was different from that of India: 'Dialectical materialists cannot accept the universality of the oedipal complex. They regard it as having been determined by a particular form of the family in a particular stage of social development.'[47] But

this general rejection of Freud's concept was an isolated one in India, and the social formation of gender identity in Indian culture has continued to be an important topic among Indian psychoanalysts.[48]

Manifestations of a boy's desires for unity with the mother are definitely found in Indian psychoanalytical publications. In his publication, 'The Working of an Unconscious Wish in the Creation of Poetry and Drama', Rangin Haldar shows the recurrence of pre-oedipal desires in Tagore's poetry, for example in verses like the following:

> O earthy mother, may I pervade this earth of thine — . . . to flow, to flow — waving, murmuring, quivering, gliding, shedding, breaking, thuddering, flushing — to flow in light, in joy, out over the whole earth.[49]

Both the poems and the analysis leave out a conflict between father and son altogether. They are concerned only with the son's attitude toward his mother, his longing to merge with her.

The intensity of the mother-son relationship is a prominent theme in Hindu myths, and perhaps the most interesting aspect of the work of Indian psychoanalysts on the family drama. Several publications imply that in Indian literary texts, the focus is not on the son's perspective — that is, his jealousy of the father's access to the mother — but rather on the father's anger about his wife's devotion to their son, and his rage about the son's access to the female object of desire. N.S.N. Sastry's article, 'Symbolism in Hindu Gods', portrayed the dramatic attempt of the father to kill his son whom he has never seen, as he had been away for a long time. The mother replaces the cut-off head of their son with an elephant's head, and thus brings the son back to life.[50]

Similarly, A.K. Ramanujan's recent analysis of Indian myths and legends emphasizes the perspective of the older and not, as in Freud's concept, of the younger generation. Discussing the difference in the flow of aggression in Indian and Western myths, he writes that the Indian and Greek/Western tales,

> do not differ in the basic pattern: (a) like sexes repel, (b) unlike sexes attract, across generations. But they do differ in the *direction* of aggression or desire. Instead of sons desiring mothers and overcoming fathers (e.g. Oedipus) . . . we have fathers suppressing sons . . . and mothers desiring sons.[51]

Indian psychoanalysts' work on the oedipal theme became more complicated when they left the literary level and described the actual family situation. Manmath Nath Banerjee, the long-time secretary of the Indian Psychoanalytical Society, for example, pointed out that there is a diversification of attachment for the child in Hindu joint families that is not found in the West:

> In connection with the development of the Oedipus situation surrogate substitutes and images of the mother and the father play an important rôle. Aunts, elder sisters, maid servants, nurses or any other elderly women are likely to be involved in the sexual situation as mother substitutes. . . .[52]

In a recent essay on the relationship between fathers and sons in India, Kakar returns to the theme of the multiplicity of parental figures, and evokes a hydra-like image of the father:

> The boy's fury at being separated from his mother is not directed toward his father alone; it is diffused against all the male authority figures who are collectively responsible for taking his mother away. Thus it makes sense, symbolically, that in Indian mythology, Ravana, the abductor of the "good mother", Sita, has not one but ten heads.[53]

A psychosociological study of daughter-father relationships in Bengali culture by Manisha Roy adds another perspective: the importance of a girl's father as the 'first' man in her life, whom she has to give up when she joins her husband and his father, grandfather, brothers, cousins, uncles, and other relatives in his home. Her own firstborn son is of major importance to her emotionally, as he helps her to redefine her position in her husband's alien family.[54] As mentioned above, Bose's view of the dissolution of the conflict also differed considerably from Freud's.

Writings by Indians about this theme are so diverse that it would be worthwhile to focus on oedipal conflicts in Indian culture as a topic by itself. Besides a closer look at the work of Indian psychoanalysts mentioned here, the publications by Daly and other foreigners like George Devereux, J.D. Mitchell, Robert Goldman, and Alan Roland would further enrich the discussion.[55]

Freud's Correspondence with Psychoanalysts in India

What were Freud's reactions to such assertions of cultural specificity, which seemed to contradict his wishes for universality and

scientific lawfulness in psychoanalysis? In contrast to Carl Gustav Jung's psychoromantic projections onto India, Freud never expressed great sympathy for the subcontinent.[56] On the contrary, in a letter to Ferenczi in 1926, he remarked after two Bengalis, first a philosopher and then Rabindranath Tagore, had visited him: 'My need of Indians is for the present fully satisfied'.[57] When the Indian Psychoanalytical Society sent him the statue of Vishnu mentioned at the beginning of this essay, along with a Sanskrit poem, his letter of thanks did not reveal any interest in the cultural symbolism of the gifts.[58] He also commented cynically on Romain Rolland's enchantment with India in a letter to him in 1930: 'I shall now try with your guidance to penetrate into the Indian jungle from which until now an uncertain blending of Hellenic love of proportion, Jewish sobriety, and philistine timidity have kept me away'.[59]

To some extent, the distance and lack of interest that Freud expressed in regard to India were reciprocal. In 1922, Bose sent him an imaginative painting by a family friend in which Freud looked like a British colonial officer. This amused Freud; as he wrote to Lou Andreas-Salomé, 'Naturally, he makes me look the complete Englishman'.[60] Whatever Bose's motivation behind this present was, such a portrayal reflected the way Bose saw Freud, as not essentially different from the colonizer. Moreover, as is obvious from Bose's publications, he deviated from classical psychoanalysis in many respects and clearly disliked Freud's emphasis on loyalty to all the aspects of his theory. In an essay on Freud, Bose wrote, for example:

> Freud maintains that so long as one does not put the proper value on child sexuality and transference and on the dynamic factors of repression described by him, one has no right to call the system psychoanalysis and oneself a psychoanalyst. This has led to the impression in certain quarters that the Freudian system is an esoteric one with Freud as the head of a church.[61]

References in Freud's correspondence and in the minutes of the Indian Psychoanalytical Society reveal that Freud exchanged letters with at least three members of the Indian Psychoanalytical Society: Sarkar, Daly, and Bose. Sarkar, a civil surgeon, who lived in Malda, West Bengal, had been one of the founding members of the Indian Psychoanalytical Society. He decided to

become an associate member of the society in 1934, as he had not undergone a training analysis. He seems to have been eager to follow Bose's example, and started writing to Freud about his work. The minutes of the Society from 1929 mention that 'Dr Sarasilal Sarkar read his letters from Professor Freud, stating that the great old man at the age of seventy-five took considerable interest in the contributions from workers from distant India'.[62] However, their correspondence appears to have lasted for a short while only, and was terminated by Freud.[63] The correspondence with Daly was destroyed when a bomb hit his residence in London in an air raid in World War II. This is especially unfortunate, as their exchange may have shed some new light on Freud's perception of female sexuality. Daly had been Freud's patient in the 1920s and had undergone a training analysis with him in 1935–6. According to John Rickman, the correspondence focused on Daly's original contribution to psychoanalysis, specifically the menstruation complex.[64]

Luckily, the correspondence between Bose and Freud was saved, because Bose made copies of his letters to Freud. Against the backdrop of their cultural differences and similarities, it is worthwhile to take a closer look at these letters. Despite all their differences, Bose and Freud shared experiences of discrimination due to not belonging to the ruling ethnic group, and both were caught in a tension between assimilating to and rejecting the cultures of their respective dominant groups. However, due to the different sociocultural and political environments in which they lived, they channeled their orientation into opposite directions. Freud, professionally marginalized and socially insecure, sought a road to emancipation in radically original, universalistic views under which race, gender, and religion could be subsumed. Bose, on the other hand, was not only well established and affluent, but belonged to a culture that could not deny its difference from that of the ruling class and lived in a time when the Indian elite became more and more proud of being different and thus tended to defend particularistic positions.

On 31 January 1929, Bose sent Freud thirteen psychoanalytical articles that he had written, and in the accompanying letter said that he would like to draw Freud's attention to his paper on the Oedipus wish, as his perspective differed considerably from Freud's views. Freud's reactions to these publications were

ambivalent. He basically defended his own theory against Bose's deviations, but tried to balance his criticism:

> I am not convinced by your arguments. . . . I still think you underrate the efficiency of the castration fear. . . . But I confess I am by no means convinced of the validity of my own assumptions. We have not yet seen through this intricate Oedipus matter. We need more observations.[65]

Bose's answer to Freud showed not only his personal self-confidence but also his awareness of cultural differences. In fact, he questioned Freud's assumption that his concepts had transcultural validity:

> Of course, I do not expect that you accept offhand my reading of the Oedipus situation. I do not deny the importance of the castration threat in European cases; my argument is that the threat owes its efficiency to its connection with the wish to be female. The real struggle lies between the desire to be a male and its opposite the desire to be a female. . . . My Indian patients do not exhibit castration symptoms to such a marked degree as my European cases. The desire to be a female is more easily unearthed in Indian male patients than in European. . . . The Oedipus mother is very often a combined parental image and this is a fact of great importance. I have reasons to believe that much of the motivation of maternal deity is traceable to this source.[66]

Freud obviously did not like to argue about this issue, and answered: 'I am fully impressed by the difference in the castration reaction between Indian and European patients and promise to keep my attention fixed on the problem of the opposite wish which you accentuate'.[67]

One would expect this to be the end of the correspondence. However, the exchange took yet a different turn after Bose sent Freud his essay, 'A New Theory of Mental Life'. On 1 January 1933, Freud wrote in a tone rather different from before, even though he repeated his earlier critique of Bose's theory of opposite wishes:

> The first letter of this new year goes out to you. I did study the essay you were so kind to send me and am deeply impressed by it. The contradictions within our current psychoanalytic theory are many and deep-going, and I reproach myself for not having given attention to your ideas before. . . . It needs more time and effort to overcome

> the feeling of unfamiliarity when confronted with a theory so different from the one professed hitherto and it is not easy to get out of the accustomed ways of thinking. So don't take it amiss when I say the theory of the opposite wishes strikes me as something less dynamic than morphological which could not have been evolved from the study of our pathological material. . . . Nor could I make the concession that the biological viewpoints in our psychology are out of place. But I am not ready yet to stand up for my objections. I am still bewildered and undecided. I see that we did neglect the fact of the existencė of opposite wishes from the three sources of bisexuality (male and female), ambivalence (love-hate) and the opposition of active-passive. These phenomena have to be worked into our system to make us see what modifications or corrections are necessary and how far we can acquiesce to your ideas.[68]

By reproaching himself for not having given attention to Bose's ideas earlier, Freud implied that in the past eleven years of their correspondence he was basically interested in gaining another foothold for psychoanalysis in the world. Compared to his earlier letter, this one is impressive for its friendly tone and concern. Nevertheless, he did not try to see Bose's theory in its Indian cultural context, as had Bose, who tried to initiate an intercultural exchange on psychoanalysis. Freud, however, was not ready for a dialogue, but insisted on a style of interaction that resembled a monologue. He considered taking only those pieces out of Bose's theory that he could appropriate without having to change anything in his own theory. Indian psychoanalytical knowledge thus became potentially a kind of intellectual raw material to be used where and when needed. Differences between European and Indian patients that Bose claimed to have noticed remained undiscussed.

Freud's proposal to work Bose's findings into his system was never carried out, and in the final letter of their correspondence, dated 25 October 1937, Freud concluded with a renewal of his ambitions: ' . . . psychoanalysis is young and will certainly progress uninterruptedly till no doubt can exist about the value of its contribution to the science of psychology.'[69]

Such attitudes were not unique to Freud, but to some extent characteristic for a European man at the turn of the century, and shared by his disciples. In 1953, Ernest Jones wrote on the founding of the Pakistani *Journal of Psychoanalysis*:

> It has been said that the findings of psychoanalysis must vary with social cultures. Analytic work in Asia has the great opportunity of testing this assertion, of ascertaining how social customs and institutions can influence the earliest development of character. . . .[70]

However, when Latif arrived in England a few years later with two big boxes of case material that he had gathered in twenty-two years of work with Indian and Pakistani patients, Jones appears to have shown no interest in it.

Confronted with the challenge to explore the 'dark' continents of their time — the unconscious, women, and the non-Western world — Freud focused on the first, admitted his difficulty in working on women, and remained disinterested in an intercultural exchange that went beyond a confirmation of his own expansionist strivings. Unlike anybody before or after him, Freud enlightened aspects of the unconscious. However, his work on women and on other cultures reflected prominent stereotypes of his time by presupposing that European men are the measure to which all human beings are to be compared. It was not a time when voices of the objects of study could expect to be listened to, except in very narrowly defined ways. Thus, just as Freud was too bound by the social norms of his time to overcome then-contemporary misogynistic views, he did not question European hegemonic attitudes, and so his psychoanalysis remained eurocentric. He thus missed the chance to learn from colleagues abroad who were sympathetic to his ideas, and who could have contributed to clarifying the 'dark aspects' in his own theory. The ivory Vishnu on Freud's desk remains a lonely trophy of a conquest, one that was never fully articulated.

Notes

1. Sigmund Freud to Girindrasekhar Bose, 13 December 1931, in Tarun Chandra Sinha, 'Development of Psychoanalysis in India', *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 47, 1966, p. 431.
2. Sudhir Kakar, *The Inner World: A Psychoanalytic Study of Childhood and Society in India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1978).
3. Ernest Jones, 'Seventh International Psychoanalytical Congress, Berlin 1922. Minutes of Business Meeting', *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 4, 1923, p. 236.

4. Ernest Jones, 'Owen Berkeley-Hill, 1879–1944', *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 25, 1944–5, p. 177; for further details, see Christiane Hartnack, 'British Psychoanalysts in Colonial India', in Mitchell G. Ash and William R. Woodward (eds), *Psychology in Twentieth-Century Thought and Society* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987) pp. 233–51.
5. Sailendra Krishna Law, 'Girindrasekhar Bose', in Indian Psychoanalytical Society, 'Special Issue on Bose', *Samiksa*, 1955, p. 9.
6. On Bose, see: Sinha, 'Development of Psychoanalysis in India', pp. 427–8; Indian Psychoanalytical Society, 'Special Issue on Bose, *Samiksa*, 1955; Devajyoti Das, *Girindrasekhar Bose* [in Bengali] (Calcutta: Bangiya Sahitya Parisat, 1971).
7. Indian Psychoanalytical Society, 'Report', *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 4, 1923, pp. 249–52, 518–19.
8. Ernest Jones, 'Review of "Concept of Repression" by Bose', *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 2, 1921, p. 453.
9. Jones to Freud, 25 November 1920, Jones Archive, British Psycho-Analytical Society, London, CFG/F02/26. Hereafter referred to as Jones Archive.
10. Vincent Brome, *Ernest Jones: A Biography* (New York: Norton, 1983) p. 162.
11. Jones to Freud, 22 December 1922, Jones Archive, CFG/F02/26.
12. Girindrasekhar Bose, 'The Duration of Coitus', *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 18, 1937, pp. 235–55.
13. Bose to Jones, 28 May 1945, Jones Archive; Freud to Bose, 1 January 1933, in Sinha, 'Development of Psychoanalysis in India', p. 431.
14. Chandak Sengoopta, 'Explorer of the Psyche', *Statesman* (Calcutta), 11 January 1987, p. 14.
15. 'Reports: Indian Psychoanalytical Society', *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 5, 1924, pp. 121–2; Manmath Nath Banerjee, 'Indian Psychoanalytical Society', *Internationale Zeitschrift für Psychoanalyse und Imago*, 14, 1928, pp. 286–8; Chandra Suhrit Mitra, 'Some Problems of Psychoanalysis', *Calcutta Review*, July 1932, pp. 32–44.
16. 'Reports of Proceedings of Societies: Indian Psychoanalytical Society', *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 16, 1935, pp. 259–61; 'Reports: Indian Psychoanalytical Society', *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 27, 1946, pp. 92–4.

17. 'Reports: Indian Psychoanalytical Society', *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 9, 1928, p. 392; Banerjee, 'Indian Psychoanalytical Society', pp. 287–8.
18. 'Reports: Indian Psychoanalytical Society', *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 14, 1933, pp. 373–7; Sengoopta, 'Explorer of the Psyche', pp. 5, 14.
19. Girindrasekhar Bose, 'A New Theory of Mental Life', *Indian Journal of Psychology*, 8, 1933, pp. 122–3; idem, 'Nature of the Wish', *Samiksa*, 5, 1951, pp. 203–14; idem, 'Analysis of Wish', *Samiksa*, 6, 1952, pp. 1–11.
20. As Deborah P. Bhattacharyya has shown, this view is closely related to indigenous views in rural Bengal. Cf. Deborah P. Bhattacharyya, *Pāgalāmi: Ethnopsychiatric Knowledge in Bengal*, South Asian Series, no. 11 (Syracuse: Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, 1986).
21. Girindrasekhar Bose, 'Yoga Sutras', *Samiksa*, 11, 1957, pp. 44–63, 157–85, 217–37; cf. references to Vatsyayana's *Kamasutra* in Bose, 'Duration of Coitus', pp. 238, 252; for a more comprehensive list of Bose's publications, see Alexander Grinstein, *The Index of Psychoanalytic Writings*, vol. I (New York: International Universities Press, 1965), pp. 211–13.
22. Girindrasekhar Bose, 'The Paranoid Ego', *Samiksa*, 2, 1948, pp. 9–20; Bose, 'New Theory of Mental Life', pp. 112–13.
23. Girindrasekhar Bose, 'Opposite Fantasies in the Release of Repression', *Indian Journal of Psychology*, 10, 1935, pp. 36–41.
24. Girindrasekhar Bose, 'The Free Association Method in Psychoanalysis', *Indian Journal of Psychology*, 1, 1926, p. 191; Bose, 'New Theory of Mental Life', p. 87; Bose, 'Opposite Fantasies', pp. 32–6.
25. Bose, 'New Theory of Mental Life', pp. 88, 103.
26. Cf. Bose to Freud, 11 April 1929, in Sinha, 'Development of Psychoanalysis in India', p. 430.
27. Cf. Kakar, *Inner World*, Ashis Nandy, 'Woman versus Womanliness in India', *Psychoanalytic Review*, 63, 1976, pp. 301–15.
28. Girindrasekhar Bose, 'The Genesis and Adjustment of the Oedipus Wish', *Samiksa*, 3, 1949, p. 237.
29. Information based on personal communications with a member of the Bose family and a relative of a former patient, Calcutta, September 1988.
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31. For example, Rangin Haldar, 'Art and the Unconscious', *Indian Journal of Psychology*, 10, 1935, p. 195.
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35. V. Narvane, 'Dialectical Materialism and Psychoanalysis', *Indian Journal of Psychology*, 23, 1948, p. 69.
36. D.M. Datta, 'The Psychology of Culture Conflict in the Light of Psychology of Insanity', *Indian Journal of Psychology*, 23, 1948, pp. 13–20.
37. Claud Dangar Daly, 'The Psychology of Revolutionary Tendencies', *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 11, 1930, p. 198.
38. Owen Berkeley-Hill, 'Hindu Muslim Unity', *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 6, 1925, p. 287.
39. S.C. Chatterjee, 'Freud on the Future of Religion', *Indian Journal of Psychology*, 15, 1940, p. 143.
40. C.N. Shah, 'Freud's Theory of Instincts', *Indian Journal of Psychology*, 15, 1940, p. 181.
41. Sarasi Lal Sarkar, 'A Study of the Psychology of Sexual Abstinence from the Dreams of an Ascetic', *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 24, 1943, pp. 170–5.
42. Manmath Nath Banerjee, 'Hindu Family and Freudian Theory', *Indian Journal of Social Work*, 3, 1944, p. 183.
43. Ibid., p. 181.
44. Owen Berkeley-Hill, 'A Short Study of the Life and Character of Mohammed', *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 2, 1921, pp. 31–53, idem, 'The Anal Erotic Factor in the Religion, Philosophy and Character of the Hindus', *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 2, 1921, pp. 306–38; Claud Dangar Daly, 'Hindu-Mythologie und Kastrationskomplex', Peter Mendelsohn (trans.), *Imago*, 13, 1927, pp. 145–98; idem, 'A Hindu Treatise on Kali', *Samiksa*, 1, 1947, pp. 191–6.
45. Hartnack, 'British Psychoanalysts in Colonial India', esp., pp. 241ff, 245ff. For a more general view of the colonial situation, see Francis G. Hutchins, *The Illusion of Permanence: British Imperialism in India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967); Ranajit Guha (ed.), *Subaltern Studies I* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1982); and Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon, 1978).

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47. Narvane, 'Dialectical Materialism and Psychoanalysis', p. 69.
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49. Rangin Haldar, 'The Working of an Unconscious Wish in the Creation of Poetry and Drama', *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 12, 1931, p. 196.
50. N.S.N. Sastry, 'Symbolism in Hindu Gods', *Indian Journal of Psychology*, 19, 1944, pp. 190–3.
51. A.K. Ramanujan, 'The Indian Oedipus', see Chapter 4 in this volume; in Lowell Edmunds and Alan Dundes (eds), *Oedipus: A Folklore Casebook* (New York: Garland, 1984) p. 252.
52. M.N. Banerjee, 'Hindu Family and Freudian Theory', p. 183.
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Part Three

The Indian Oedipus

4

The Indian Oedipus

A.K. Ramanujan

Introduction[1]

Searching for stories of the Oedipus type (Tale Type 931) some years ago in the myth and folklore of the Indic area (i.e., India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Ceylon), I found very little that looked like the Sophocles play, where a young man kills his father and marries his mother. The very few instances I found were of the following kind:

(a) A Tamil folk-anecdote about Ganeśa. Once Pārvati asked him whom he would like to marry; he replied, 'Someone exactly like you, Mother', and Mother got outraged by such an open incestuous wish and cursed him with everlasting celibacy; that's why he is still a bachelor.

(b) An averted 'Oedipus' from Tamilnad, Ceylon etc. (Indic Type 674). A son grows up without knowing who his true mother is. When full-grown, he sees his mother, falls in love with her (N 365.1.1) and goes to her at night hoping to become her lover. On the way he overhears animals talking (N 451) and learns the truth.

(c) In certain versions of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, Sītā is Rāvaṇa's daughter, born with a curse on her head that she would bring death to her father. Rāvaṇa tries to get rid of her, and she ends up in a strange Northern land where she marries Rāma, gets abducted by an unsuspecting Rāvaṇa, and Rāma of course kills him. Son-in-law Rāma can be seen as a substitute son. The father-daughter relations suggested in this story call for further discussion.

(d) In the *Mahābhārata* and a popular Kannaḍa *Yakṣagāna* play based on it, Arjuna fights with his own son Babhruvāhana who slays his father in battle, but Arjuna is later revived.
(e) In the Bengali *Rāmāyaṇa*, Rāma's sons Lava and Kuśa kill Rāma in battle.
(f) And there are instances in the *Ṛgveda*: 'Who, O Indra, made thy mother a widow? What god was present in the fray when thou did slay thy father, seizing him by the foot?' (Rg. IV. 18.12).

But all these instances seemed to me rather marginal, generally not known or preserved in the most influential versions of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the *Mahābhārata* or the popular lore. I found nothing as explicit as the Greek myth. Others had searched before me (Spratt 1966) and concluded that Indian narrative has no oedipal tales, and therefore, of course, Indians have no oedipus complex. According to one writer, at least, the unfortunate lack of an oedipus complex had prevented Indians from developing a form like the novel or from overthrowing the Mughals or the British by a bloody upheaval, etc.

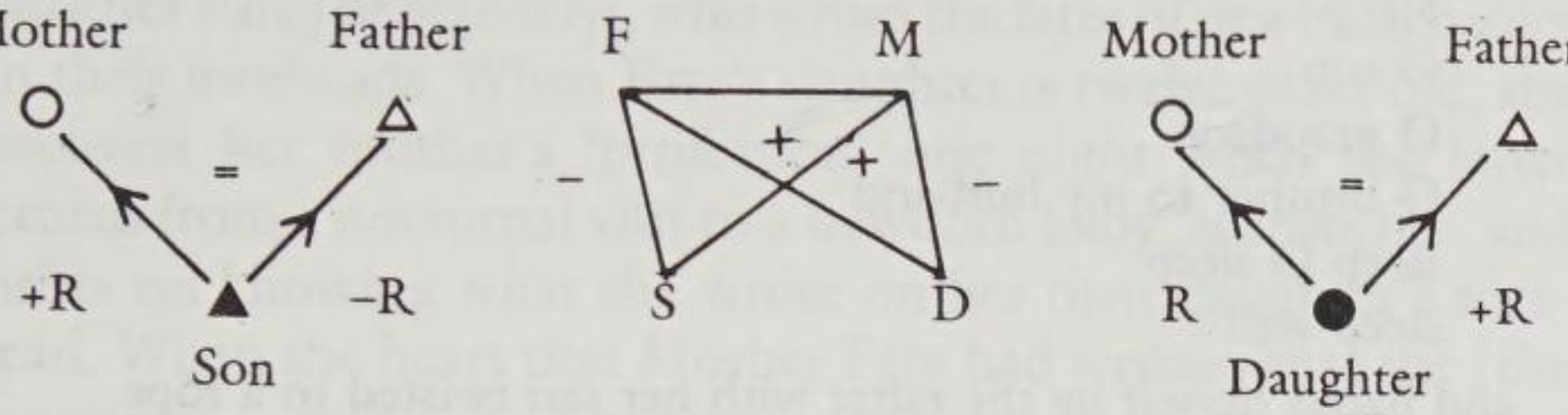
In the present paper I wish to report on a few Oedipus-like patterns in Indian myth and folklore and suggest an interpretation.

The Oedipus Type (AT 931)

For the purpose of our search, we may briefly look at the familiar European pattern, as in the classical play of Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*. A young man, fated to kill his father and marry his mother, tries to escape the curse of fate, but ironically, unwittingly, fulfills it. The Electra-story displays the same relational pattern with the sexes reversed: Electra-figures love their fathers and hate their mothers. For our purposes, all four types of dyadic relations, father/son, mother/son, father/daughter, mother/daughter, will be considered 'oedipal'. In the Greek myths of Oedipus and Electra,

1. Son kills father
2. Son marries mother
3. Daughter loves father, wishes to avenge his death, etc.
4. Daughter hates mother, wants her killed, etc.

If we call 'love, pursue, desire to marry, or wish to do any or all of these' + *Relations*, and 'hate, castrate, kill, or wish to do any or all of these' – *Relations*, we get the following patterns:



If we extended father, son, mother, daughter to other figures who have similar functions, and on whom these parent-child relations are projected, we have a whole body of narratives which exemplify the pattern of whom Hamlet and Oedipus are only two instances. The signal Indian instance is Kṛṣṇa, fated to kill Kaṃsa, his uncle. But no tragic fate befalls Kṛṣṇa, as it befalls Oedipus.

Indian Examples

Relations of Mother and Son

In 1963, an illiterate, half-blind old woman in a North Karnataka village startled me with the following tale:

> A girl is born with a curse on her head that she would marry her own son and beget a son by him. As soon as she hears of the curse, she willfully vows she'd try and escape it: she secludes herself in a dense forest, eating only fruit, forswearing all male company. But when she attains puberty, as fate would have it, she eats a mango from a tree under which a passing king has urinated. The mango impregnates her; bewildered, she gives birth to a male child; she wraps him in a piece of her sari and throws him in a nearby stream. The child is picked up by the king of the next kingdom, and he grows up to be a handsome young adventurous prince. He comes hunting in the self-same jungle, and the cursed woman falls in love with the stranger, telling herself she is not in danger any more as she has no son alive.

She marries him and bears him a child. According to custom, the father's swaddling clothes are preserved and brought out for the newborn son. The woman recognizes at once the piece of sari with which she had swaddled her first son, now her husband, and understands that her fate had really caught up with her. She waits till everyone is asleep, and sings a lullaby to her newborn baby:

Sleep
O son
O grandson
O brother to my husband
sleep O sleep
sleep well

and hangs herself by the rafter with her sari twisted to a rope.

Since 1963, I have found several variants of this tale from other districts; I also found Marathi versions collected in neighbouring Maharāṣṭra, and variants in some old Jaina texts. In the next few pages we shall examine these variants, discuss the variations episode by episode, comparing parallels in texts and oral traditions, and suggest the significance of each episode.

The tale is strikingly exact in its parallels to the Greek Oedipus, but the narrative point of view is entirely different. It is the mother, the Jocasta-figure, who is accursed, tries to escape her fate, and when finally trammeled in it, it is she who makes the discovery and punishes herself with death. The son is merely a passive actor, a part of his mother's fate — unlike the Greek Oedipus. Such reversals of narrative point of view are yet to be studied in comparative and structural mythology. The Greek and Kannada Oedipus-tales provide a very neat example of a pair of tales in which a *structure* is the same, but the narrative *point of view* is exactly in reverse. Parallels were hard to find earlier because I began with the Greek pattern; the search was too literal-minded, and I did not see that in a different cultural context a familiar pattern may appear standing on its head — the great Indian image of the cosmic tree is the tree with its branches in the earth and the roots in the air.

The Variants

In the eight variants (three from my fieldnotes, five from the following: Karve 1950, Dhavaṭaśri 1968, Paramaśivayya 1970$_a$

and 1970b, Lingayya 1971) I shall consider; variations occur at the following points in the sequence.

1. The Prophecy

Instead of a curse, an astrologer's prophecy initiates the action in one. In others there is a divine parent: we have Vidhiyamma (Mother Fate) or Śeṭivitāyi, who writes the fates of newborn babies on their foreheads. When Fate's daughter is twelve years old, she discovers her mother's 'profession' one night when the latter returns from a nocturnal visit to a newborn baby, accosts her, and insists on knowing what she wrote on her own daughter's forehead. When she hears that Mother Fate had written that she (the daughter) would marry her own son, she flies into a rage and proceeds to defy her 'lifescript'.[2] It is significant that the daughter is twelve years old, an age when Indian girls enter puberty.

2. How She Gets Pregnant

In none of the variants does the girl get pregnant by actual sexual intercourse. Only in one variant, semen is mentioned: a king sits on her sari spread out to dry in the sun, is excited by it, leaves his seed on it. She wears the sari later and gets big with child. In several she gets pregnant by eating a mango from a tree, or a patch of greens, watered by a king's urine. In one, she drinks from a pool where a bull has urinated. In another, she gets pregnant by drinking water from a pool in which a king has rinsed his mouth. Either way, his body fluids (saliva and urine are two of the polluting body fluids mentioned by the ancient lawgiver, Manu — sweat, blood, semen, tears and mother's milk being the others) are treated as capable of impregnating the woman. In other folk tales, and in myths, 'blood, sweat, and tears' are all seen as capable of making babies. In this worldview, no body fluid is non-sexual, at least non-procreative. Another interesting aspect here is the confusion of the procreative and alimentary channels, noted by Freud as characteristic of the child's view of reproduction.[3]

3. The Lullaby

Only two variants contain the lullaby at the end which describes the 'unnatural' confusion of kinship relations.[4] Mother marrying

son and begetting another son by him collapses generational differences. By this act, son and grandson become one. It conflates the difference between kin by birth and kin by marriage: son and husband become one, so do mother-in-law and mother; and so on. The most fantastic of these kin-confusions is in Jaina tales (my examples here are all literary). In one, a courtesan has twins whom she abandons; they grow up separately, meet and marry, but recognize their kinship by the rings they wear; the son travels far, becomes his mother's lover and begets a son; his spouse and sister, who renounces the world, acquires magical vision, comes to warn her mother and brother, sees their son, and addresses him thus:

> O child! you are my brother, brother-in-law, grandson, son of my co-wife, nephew, uncle. Your father is my brother, husband, father, grandfather, father-in-law, and son. Your mother is my mother, mother-in-law, co-wife, my brother's wife, grandmother, and wife (Jain 1977, Appendix 1.566).

It is clear that in the Jaina examples (for other examples see Karve 1950), the point of the tale is not Fate, nor oedipal patterns of mother/son relations, but the destruction of the kinship diagram. Such a confusion of clear-cut kinship relations (son/husband, mother/mother-in-law, etc.) would be devastating to a child, would make a shambles of his ordered family world. That seems to be part of the terror of the incest taboo and the poignancy of some of the folktales. (The Jaina literary tale defuses the charge of the tale by its clever elaboration and overdoing the list of paradoxical relations.) The characteristic response to such a disorienting sin in these tales is suicide (of the mother, the heroine) or a renouncing of the world by the hero. Such a renunciation, a withdrawal from all relations, in Indian terms, is a kind of social suicide — one becomes a *sanyasi* by performing a funeral rite on oneself.

4. The End

The end of the tale is interestingly different in three of my variants. Instead of the heroine killing herself or renouncing the world, she recognizes that her fate has been fulfilled or she prays to a goddess who counsels her to accept her fate; she doesn't tell anyone about her incestuous marriage, lives happily with her

husband, 'blessed by her aged parents-in-law to whom she was always kind and dutiful'. When anthropologist Karve asked the illiterate Maratha woman (who told the story to her daughter) what she thought of it, she replied, 'But what else could she do? You know, madam, it was written so'. Not only that; Karve says, 'At the end of the tale my little daughter and the narrator were both laughing at the queerness of the happening' (Karve 1950).

As Karve remarks, many of the incest-tales (like the Jaina one above) are told as illustrations of the sinfulness of all wordly relations or as conundrums and guessing games — not as deeply tragic tales. In a variant from Salsette, the girl is foretold that she would marry a low caste man and later marry her own son. When the prophecies come true, she is disgusted by the former but accepts the latter as her fate (D'Penha, 45). How different in ethos from the Greek Oedipus!

It should be noted here that this story is told invariably by women and to girls. The protagonists of the story are women; the men are pawns in the story of women's fate. Karve's Maratha woman heard it from her old sister-in-law when she was about fifteen and told it to Karve's daughter. All my Kannada variants were collected from older motherly women.

We may now summarize the variations in the form of an archetype or composite tale. As this type of Oedipus tale has not been clearly identified so far, we may suggest a number like 931B (Ind.?).

I. The Prophecy: An astrologer or a divine parent (Brahmā, Vidhiyamma/Mother Fate, or Śeṭivitāyi prophesies that a girl will marry her own son and beget a son by him. When the girl learns of it (usually at puberty), she flees home and (a) secludes herself in a forest, or (b) magically enters a tree, coming out only for food.

II. The Prophecy Fulfilled: (a) She eats (a_1) a mango from a tree, or (a_2) greens from a patch, where a king has urinated; or (b) drinks water from a pool where (b_1) a king has rinsed his mouth or (b_2) a bull has urinated; or (c) wears a sari on which (c_1) a king has sat or (c_2) spilled his seed. (d) She gets pregnant, and when she gives birth to a son, she (d_1) pounds the child's head with a rock and/or (d_2) leaves him on the hillside, or (d_1) sets

him afloat in the river after wrapping him in a piece of her sari. (e) The boy is rescued by (e_1) fishermen or (e_2) shepherds, and grows up. (f) Years later, unwittingly, (f_1) she goes to her son's house, or (f_2) the son comes hunting. Or (g) the king's men try to cut down the tree in which she lives, and discover her. (h) Mother and son meet, marry, and she gives birth to a son.

III. (a) The Discovery: Takes place (a_1) when she is delousing her husband (son) and sees scars, or (a_2) when she discovers her sari-piece, in which she had wrapped her first son and which is brought out (according to custom) for her newborn's naming ritual.

IV. The Consequence: (a) She sings a lullaby about the incestuous confusion of kin-relations (e.g., son is also grandson and husband's brother), and hangs herself. Or (b) she accepts her fate and lives happily with her son/husband and offspring, (b_1) after being advised by a goddess.

Chief Motifs

A 463.1	The Fates
M 301	The prophets (astrologers)
M 344	Mother-son incest prophecy
M 370	Vain attempts to escape fulfilment of prophecy
M 371	Exposure of child to avoid fulfilment of prophecy
S 331	Exposure of child in boat (floating chest)
S 141	Abandonment in forest
R 131.3.1	Shepherd rescues abandoned child
T 412	Mother-son incest
N 101	Inexorable fate
H 51	Recognition by scar

In an earlier paper (1972), I compared the Greek Oedipus myth with the Kannada Oedipus tale. A glance at the motifs is enough to show how close yet how different the two are. The Greek myth is central to that culture; it is the object of much literary elaboration and psychological discussion. In it the killing of the father, Laius, is as important as the son marrying the mother. The story is told entirely from the viewpoint of the young male, the son: He is the cursed one, he is the one who tries to

escape fate and fulfils it, he is the one who discovers the truth about himself. The Kannada tale, told by village women, is not the source of tragic intensity nor the object of great literary elaboration. There is no Laius-figure, and therefore no patricide, in any of the tales. The tale, in its episodic sequence, is exactly the same as the Greek one but told entirely from the woman's, the mother's, point of view.

To structural analysis, we need to add *point of view*, before we can interpret a tale. One may ultimately decide that such reversals (male to female, son fated to marry mother instead of mother being fated to marry son, etc.) as structurally or psychoanalytically reducible to a single pattern. But the presence of such differences in point of view should be interpreted in the light of other parts of the cultures.

The great importance of sons to mothers in the politics of the Indian family (Kakar 1978: 57), the prolonged period of breast-feeding, the practice in many families of sons sleeping next to mothers almost until they are adolescent does make the mother-marries-son tale significant. It expresses a mother's desire and real temptation to cling to her son. Furthermore, Hindus believe that fathers are reborn as sons.[5] The rivalry between fathers and sons for the mother is because the mother loves her son and the father is left out. We shall see other aspects of this father-son rivalry in the next section. Here are a few more supporting examples of the closeness of mother and son, with the father left out.

There is a recurrent motif in folktales in South India and elsewhere (Motif J 21.2): A father returns from a long exile or journey and enters his bedroom to find a strange young man sleeping next to his wife. He draws his sword to kill them both, when either his waking wife or a remembered precept ('Don't act when angry') stays his hand. The young man is really his son grown to manhood during his long absence but still sleeping innocently in the same bed as his dear mother.

A rare example of mother-son relations in mythology is the Bengali legend about the goddess Durgā, whose intercourse with her son is watched and noisily interrupted by peacocks. Durgā gets angry with the peacock for being a peeping Tom and curses the peacock with impotence and an ugly squeal for a voice. She relents later and allows peacocks to have offspring by means of their tears. One could also add the Potiphar's Wife

motif (K 2111.1), of which we have many examples in India; e.g., the Tamil story of Kuṇāḷan (Type 706). A stepmother desires her stepson who rejects her advances. She accuses him of making improper advances to her and his father punishes him by blinding his eyes. (Blinding, here or in Oedipus, is a well-recognized symbol for castration.)

Relations of Father and Son

The most striking difference between the Kannada tale and the Greek myth is the absence of the father and hence of patricide. There are very, very few stories of actual patricide in Hindu myth, literature, and folklore. A few marginal instances were listed at the beginning of this essay: Arjuna killed by his son, Rāma killed by his sons, both in battle, both revived later. The most explicit instance I know is in the sixteenth-century Tamil next *Tiruviḷaiyāṭalpurāṇam* (13th c.?), cited by Hart (1980): A brāhman sleeps with his willing mother again and again. Once his father interrupts him in the act, so he axes his father. From then on, his father's shadow-form sticks to him, interrupts with its cries all his daily activities and gives him no rest. His sin is expiated by the grace of Śiva and by the penance of rolling round the corridors of Śiva's temple. But such stories are rare or little known. Even here, as Goldman (1978: 370) points out,

> the expiation involves the reconstruction of the lost family, the original oedipal triangle, which occurs through the sinner's being adopted by Śiva and his wife. The wretch is saved only when he can accept the status of a submissive and devoted son to his divine parents.

But another pattern is very common: the aggression of the father towards the son. In all these stories the son willingly gives up (often transfers) his political and sexual potency. In the epic *Mahābhārata*, Bhīṣma, the first son of Śantanu, renounces both kingdom and his reproductive sexual life so that his father may marry a fishergirl and continue his (father's) sexual/reproductive life. Bhīṣma, lifelong celibate, lives on to become the most revered old man of the epic, warrior and wise man.

Yayātī, a king cursed by a sage to suffer senility, wishes to prolong his life of pleasure and asks his five sons to transfer their youth to him. The eldest sons refuse and earn his curses. The

youngest son exchanges his youth for Yayātī's age for a thousand years. For this sacrifice, the son receives great honour, and inherits the whole kingdom later.

A more explicit instance of a father's aggressive rivalry towards a son is the following: The sage Bṛhaspatī desires his elder brother's wife, Mamatā. She protests that she is pregnant, and that the embryo in her womb, which already knows the Vedas, will not allow his seed to grow in her womb; he should therefore wait till she has delivered. Nevertheless he insists, but the embryo cries out and prevents him from fulfiling his desire. Bṛhaspatī therefore curses the embryo with blindness. The child is called Dirghatamas, deep darkness.

This story opens with the positive oedipal pattern: a younger man desires an older woman (an elder brother's wife is equal to a mother), and the embryo in the womb resists the father-figure. But it ends with the latter striking the embryo with blindness.

It is significant that the Dirghatamas story is told by Bhīṣma, and in the *Rāmāyaṇa* the Yayātī story is told by Rāma when he is exiled by his aged father. Such replication and reminiscence, such evocations of precedent at a crucially parallel moment by a character participating in the very patterns set by the precedent — these are part of literary technique as well as evidence for a major cultural 'imprinting' of themes.

Many more instances may be cited of the father-son conflict with the father as victorious aggressor. I shall add only one more: the story of Gaṇeśa, the elephant-headed god. Pārvati went to bathe, and stationed Gaṇeśa, her son, at the door, telling him to let nobody in. (In the *Śiva Purāṇa*, the scene is set in the bedchamber.) Her husband Śiva wanted to enter; and when Gaṇeśa tried to stop him, Śiva cut off his head, which was later replaced by an elephant head. In some legends, Gaṇeśa already had an elephant head, and Śiva broke off one tusk (as seen in the iconography). The Freudian implications of the father beheading or breaking off the son's tusk are obvious.

Goldman (1978), in the paper cited earlier, takes issue with my point regarding the 'reverse Oedipus' in India. He enlarges on some of my examples (and adds several more) with great erudition, makes several acceptable corrections (which I have incorporated here), and points to an important displacement of the 'positive' oedipal theme: the rivalry between brahmans and

kṣatriya kings. The most famous of these conflicts is that of Sage Vasiṣṭha and King Viśvāmitra, over the former's all-nurturing cow ('India's eternal mother symbol', Goldman 1978: 353). The triangle is: aged brahman (father), covetous king (son), and cow (mother). Helped by the cow's magical powers which create whole outcaste armies, Vasiṣṭha destroys Viśvāmitra's forces and his hundred sons. Viśvāmitra, dejected by defeat, acquires terrible weapons by penance, and returns to destroy Vasiṣṭha's hermitage. Vasiṣṭha's staff absorbs all of Viśvāmitra's weapons. In a final show of rage, Vasiṣṭha 'assumes a dreadful form with flames shooting from the pores of his body, a veritable nightmare fantasy of paternal rage'. Fearful of the destruction of the whole world, the hosts of sages, a sort of chorus representing collectively the voice of the paternal conscience or superego, begs Vasiṣṭha to calm himself. The sage is appeased. Viśvāmitra

> realizes the incomparable potency of the paternal phallus as symbolized by the upraised staff of the aged brahman. He resolves to acquire this same potency himself . . . [through painful austerities] he attains the status of a brahman in one lifetime . . . Vasiṣṭha relents and befriends his old rival, according him the paternal blessing [by addressing him as a brahman sage] (Goldman 1978: 351–4).

In the end Viśvāmitra does homage to Vasiṣṭha.

The Kannada temple legend of Piriyāpaṭṭaṇa (Rajashekhara 1980: 527) also expresses the Brahman/King oedipal conflict in symbolic ways too obvious to need comment:

> A brahman gives a king a sacred pot for safekeeping. The king's servants discover that the water in the pot turns iron into gold. The king covets the pot, kills the brahman when he returns. But the betrayed brahman becomes a demon and torments him by attaching himself to him. The brahman demon leaves him only when he enters a Śiva temple but swoops on him again when he comes out of it. The mother goddess (Urimasaṇi) at the Vaidyeśvara temple saves him by letting the king through one of the temple's three doors and letting him out unexpectedly through another.

Note the meaningful motifs of coveting the father-figure's pot, the tormenting guilt that follows him everywhere, and release through a mother-figure (with three doors to the temple) in a fatherly god's abode.

The oedipal conflict is most explicit in such brahman-king

relations as well as in *guru*-disciple relations. For a fuller exposition, see Goldman 1978.

Though there is no clear word for 'incest' in Indian languages, as Nicholas (1976: 14–15) points out, there are a series of words for the crime of 'sexual intercourse in the bed of the guru' (*gurutalpabhigamana*). This offense is included in their codes by Manu (IX.235) and by other *Dharmaśāstra* writers among 'great sins' (*mahāpataka*) along with brahminicide. The foremost meaning of *guru*, however, is 'father' in Manu (II.142); also 'preceptor', any senior or 'weighty' person. Thus one sees that the Hindu writers are quite aware of transferences and generalizations of an 'object-cathexis'. To their definition of this incestuous sin of intercourse with a *guru*'s wife, they add a list of other sins 'of the same form' (*tādrūpya*) or 'equal' (*sāmya*). Nicholas (1976: 16) continues and cites the longest of such enumerations from the *Nāradasmṛti*.

> If a man has sexual intercourse with any of these women viz. mother, mother sister, mother-in-law, a wife of a paternal uncle or a friend or a pupil, a sister, a sister's friend, daughter-in-law, the wife of one's Vedic teacher, a woman of the same gotra (clan), one who has come for protection, a queen, an ascetic woman, one's wet-nurse, a woman performing a *vrata* (vow) and a *brāhmaṇa* woman, he becomes guilty of the sin of the violator of the guru's bed (i.e., incest). For that crime no other punishment is laid down except that of cutting the penis.

In all these cases, we must note that the son never wins, almost never kills the father-figure. Where a younger man kills the older, as when Arjuna kills Bhīṣma, it is clear that it is the latter who teaches him a way of doing so. The power of the father-figure is never overthrown.

The only instance, and it is a very important one, is that of Kṛṣṇa killing Kaṃsa, his demonic uncle who has tried to destroy him in many ways ever since he was born. Kṛṣṇa also incites Arjuna to kill in war all his father-figures, especially Bhīṣma. Here too, one must note that Kṛṣṇa is a god, supreme in power, and invulnerable — unlike all the son-figures.

As Goldman concedes, the pattern of the aggressive father and submissive son [who by submission becomes a hero, and attains power and honor in later life, as Bhīṣma does) is 'without doubt representative of an Oedipal type that the culture strongly

favors'; such figures as Bhīṣma and Rāma, ideal sons, 'do constitute the ego-ideal for Hindu men' (Goldman 1978: 364).

Relations of Father and Daughter

The most ancient myths bear witness to a father's desire for his daughter. We shall cite here only two: The *Satapatha Brāhmana* 1.7.41–4 has the following: Prājapatī, the father of the gods, the creator, cast his eyes upon his own daughter, desiring 'May I pair with her'. So saying, he had intercourse with her. This was a crime in the eyes of the gods, who said, 'He is guilty who acts thus to his own daughter, our sister: pierce him through'. Rudra aimed at him and pierced him. Half of his seed fell to the ground.

In later times Prājapatī is called Brahma, the Grandfather. A new version of the above, 'positive Oedipus' story appears in the *Matsya Purāṇa* III, 30–34:

> When Brahma began his work of creation, the goddess Gāyatri appeared in the form of a girl from one half of Brahma's body, who mistakenly took her for his daughter. Seeing that form of exquisite beauty, he was fired with love. . . . The sons of Brahma, taking Gāyatri for their sister, expressed indignation and contempt . . . Gāyatri began to circumambulate him in reverence . . . he felt shy of turning his head in her direction, as his sons were close by. He therefore created four heads, each facing one of the directions, so that he might see her undisturbed. Seeing Brahma in this state, Gāyatri went to heaven, and as she journeyed upward, Brahma put a fifth head on top. . . . After this Brahma lost the powers that he had acquired by asceticism.

For more instances, see O'Flaherty (1975: 26, 29, 31, 34, 35, 117) and the Bengali examples in Nicholas (1976).

In the Kannada *Vaddhārādhane* (a Jaina work *circa* 9th century), a king falls in love with his youngest daughter, and asks his wives and counsellors, 'If there is a lovely thing born in my kingdoms, to whom does it belong?' They say, 'Of course, the best horses, elephants, pearls, precious stones and the loveliest women in a kingdom belong to the king'. Then he asks the sages the same question, who (being sages) answer, 'You'll have to tell us what particular thing you are thinking of. Then we can tell you what belongs to whom and what doesn't'. The king gets

angry and drives them out for dissenting and asking inconvenient questions. Then he marries his youngest daughter. She bears him children. Her son Kārtīka goes for some sort of boys' picnic in the woods where all the rest of the boys get (apparently according to custom) food, flowers and clothes from their families, especially from grandparents. When Kārtīka doesn't receive anything from his grandparents, he comes home and asks his mother, 'Mother, where is your father, my grandfather? Do I have one or not?' She tells him in grief, 'What shall I tell you, my son? Your father is also my father'. As soon as he hears it, Kārtīka is shocked, finds it reason enough to renounce the world and become a wandering ascetic.

Note here, as in the Oedipus stories, the emphasis placed on the resulting confusion of normal kin-relations, especially the conflation of generations (grandfather-father-son-brother) resulting from incestuous relations — and the son's horror at such a discovery.

A Tamil tale has a similar father-daughter pattern, but here the father doesn't get the daughters. A king has no children. He prays to Śiva, who appears to him and tells him, 'You have a choice. You can either choose one ordinary son or four beautiful talented daughters'. The king chooses the daughters (note the preference!). They do grow up to be four talented, divinely beautiful young women. One day the daughters are watching from the balcony while a clumsy tone-deaf masseur is patting oil into the king's body with all the wrong rhythms. The daughters are disgusted with the unmusical performance, come down from the balcony, dismiss the lout, and proceed to give the delighted father an oil-bath, all four of them massaging and patting oil into his limbs in pleasing rhythms, conducting a very orchestra of touch. After the bath, which sends the king into an ecstasy of pleasure, he is filled with desire for them and goes into the dark room specially reserved in ancient Indian palaces for doldrums, tantrums and sulks. When the family and the counsellors gather to ask him why he is sullen and unhappy, he asks a question similar to the one in the Kannada Jaina legend: 'If I have something precious, should I enjoy it myself or give it away?' The unsuspecting ministers tell him, 'Go ahead. Enjoy what you have'. Delighted, he answers, 'I'm in love with my daughters. I want to marry them right away. Make the necessary arrangements'.

The ministers think he is mad, but humor him by saying that they would take care of it. Then they rush to the daughters with the bad news; the resourceful daughters pray to the goddess Pārvati who transports them into a sealed lacquer palace in the heart of a jungle — a seven-storied palace, with living quarters on the first, and food and clothing of every kind stored up in the six upper stories to last several years. The palace has no doors or windows: a good image for virginity, indeed. Several years later, a prince strays into the jungle and hears strange *viṇa* (lute) music which lures him to the sealed palace, and it opens miraculously to let him in. He falls in love with all four of them and marries them. The young women's virginity was offered only to the rightful young man, after being denied to the incestuous father (Sastri 1968).

In a Kannada folk-*Rāmāyaṇa*, we see one more transformation of the Oedipus pattern:

> Rāvaṇa brings his barren wife a magic mango, a boon from Śiva. On his way back, he is hungry and so eats the fruit and becomes pregnant himself. His nine days are equal to nine months and he sneezes nine times, and a daughter is born. He casts the child as inauspicious in the Ganges. Later he is infatuated with her, tries to marry her, and fails in the marriage-test. Rāma wins and marries her. Later Rāvaṇa abducts her. Rāma kills him with the help of Rāvaṇa's wife, and rescues Sitā (Rāgau *et al.* 1973: 150 ff).

The interesting features of this pregnant-father motif (found elsewhere in India, too) are (a) the envy of female fertility/potency, or womb-envy, (b) the way the father bypasses a mother to beget a daughter so that there is no father/mother/daughter triangle, (c) the way he tries to marry his daughter, thereby trying to be his own son-in-law.

These tales clearly express a common Indian folktale theme, the sexual assault of the young woman by older non-marriageable kin — here a father, in many tales an elder brother — and non-kin (e.g., a lecherous ascetic or guru). Dozens of tales open with the flight of the daughter from the lecherous father-figure. The young woman's character and chastity are tested by such incestuous and adulterous assaults (e.g., the Kannada tale of Hanci, in Ramanujan 1982); she withstands them till she meets her legitimate husband. As noted earlier, father, elder brother and

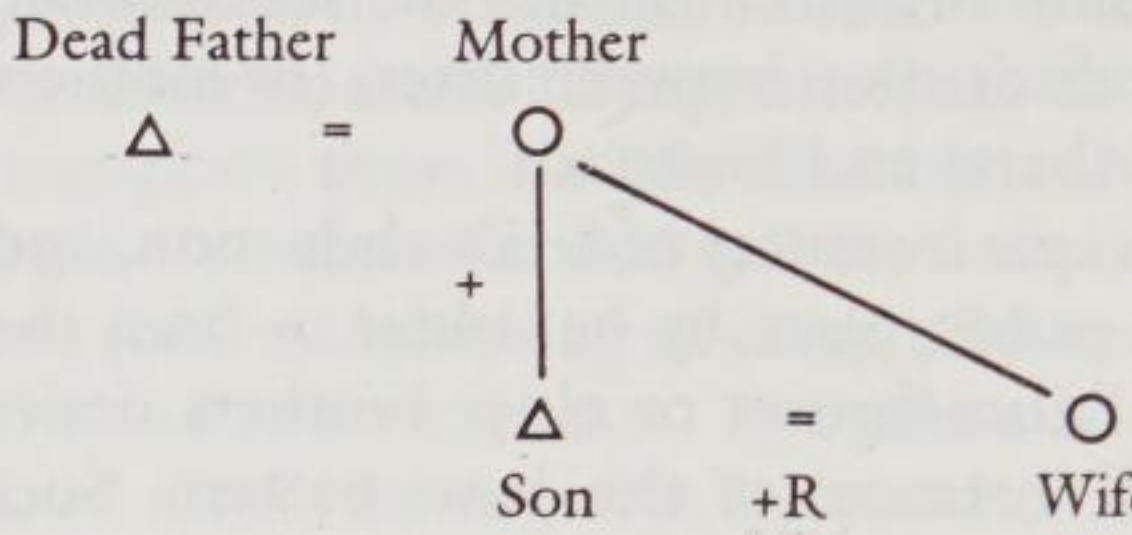
guru are equivalent. As we well know, and as the Oedipus tales point out, kinship organization and the social order based on it depend on the distinction between sisters (or mothers) and wives, fathers (or brothers) and husbands.

The famous epic instances of Sitā's abduction, and Draupadi's disrobing in a public place by her older in-laws, the many tales where ascetic father-figures or elder brothers desire the young woman, are all instances of this basic pattern. Such and other chastity-ordeals for the young woman parallel the long exile, symbolic castration or heroic ordeals of the young male heir, usually required by the father. In the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the elder two sons Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa go to the forest for fourteen years to fulfil their father's promise to his youngest wife. They divest themselves of all royal powers and privileges and don ascetic bark-garments. In the forest Rāma's wife, Sitā, is abducted by Rāvaṇa who arrives in the guise of a venerable sage.

Relations of Mother and Daughter

I have not yet found striking and explicit tales of a mother's rivalry with her own daughter, but one could cite numerous tales of stepmothers tormenting or exiling their stepdaughters, and cruel mothers-in-law trying to kill or harm daughters-in-law. Demonic mother-goddesses, ogresses, stepmothers and mothers-in-law are mother-figures specializing in the terrible aspects of mothers toward daughters; the evidence in the tales is not as neat as in the above three dyads (father-son, mother-son, father-daughter): these cruel mother-figures never win in the folk tales. In Tamil, in-law tales are told from both the younger and the older woman's point of view. There are two kinds of mother-in-law tales: (a) The cruel mother-in-law, and (b) The mother-in-law as victim. Certainly the conflict between mother- and daughter-figures is very much in evidence in these tales. Mother-in-law tales, like all oedipal tales, exhibit a rivalry and conflict over a loved one; here the rivalry is between an older and a younger woman vying for the support and attention of the same man (who is, here, both son to the mother and husband to the daughter-in-law). It is significant that in all these mother-in-law tales, the father is rarely in evidence.

The rivalry between the barren elder queen-mothers and the

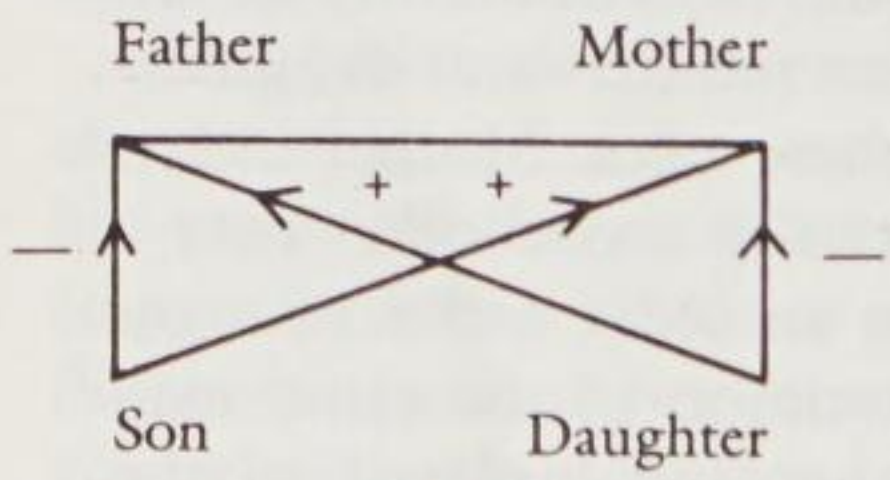


youngest queen who becomes pregnant is blatantly so for sexual success with the king (Type 707, found plentifully all over India). It also approximates a mother-daughter rivalry, with the older mother-figure vilifying and exiling the younger woman who is finally vindicated.

Generalization

If we consider the above four relationships, we see that the Indian and the Greek tales contrasted by where they differ or do not differ in the basic pattern: (a) like sexes repel, (b) unlike sexes attract, across generations. But they do differ in the *direction* of aggression or desire. Instead of sons desiring mothers and overcoming fathers (e.g., Oedipus) and daughters loving fathers and hating mothers (e.g., Electra), most often we have fathers (or father-figures) suppressing sons and desiring daughters, and mothers desiring sons and ill-treating or exiling daughters or daughter-figures.

The structure or matrix of relations and actors is the same, but the *direction* is in reverse:



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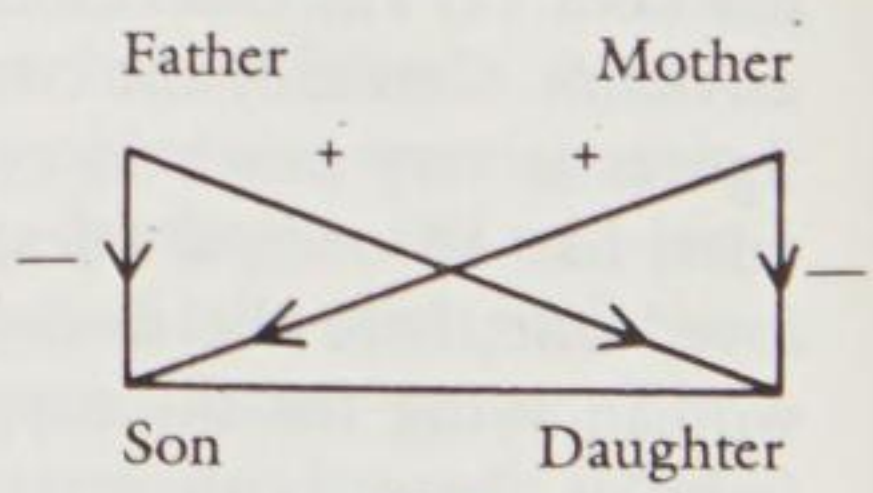

INDIAN

Furthermore, if the Greek (western) son wishes to (or actually does) supplant the father, we find in many tales that the Indian father wishes to supplant his son-in-law by marrying his own daughter. Similarly the mother wishes to supplant her daughter-in-law by marrying her own son; the western Electras wish to get rid of mothers and take their place. There are no Laius-figures killed in the Indian tales where mother marries son. There are no fathers in the mother-in-law tales either, where the mother competes with the son's wife; and no mother in the father-daughter tales. The prize sought is not the older cross-sex member of the triangle but the younger.

Speculations

I have a few observations and some questions.

The Indian oedipus pattern, especially in the father-daughter stories, is closer to 'screen memories', 'seduction memories' that Freud describes in his Letter 69 to Fliess, in 1897. 'In my analyses, I find it's the closest relatives, fathers or brothers, who are guilty men', he says on 28 April 1897. Within a few months he changed his mind: 'I no longer believe in my neurotica', or seduction theory. In every case, 'the blame was laid on perverse acts by the father' (21 September 1897). Though he was torn over this theory, by 1905, when the Dora case was published, he had decided that such stories were projections of a daughter's sexual drive towards the father. A memory of a parental seduction is only a defensive reversal of the child's own wish to possess the parent. There has been much heated debate on the reasons for Freud's changes of mind — the debate even made newspaper headlines (*The New York Times*, Tuesday, 25 August 1981). For an earlier scholarly discussion of this important matter, see Ricoeur (1972: 188–9) and elsewhere.

Why do the Indian tales cited here present the reverse, defensive, 'negative' Oedipus-type? And the Greek Oedipus the 'positive' (son-marries-mother, etc.) type? Is there a correlation to other aspects of the two cultures? Even if we think of the two types as transformations of each other, we still need an explanation (cultural, psychological, or other) for the predominance of one sub-type or another.

The problem of psychoanalytic universals is a difficult and

important one. Is the Oedipus complex universal? Does it take the same form regardless of culture? People in all cultures have fathers, mothers, sons and daughters. But the relations between them are not culture-free. Kinship patterns, property laws, the dominance of male or female in power, lineage or residence, attitudes to old age or childhood, and more, are all influential in deciding psychological patterns. While intergenerational competition (Kluckhohn's phrase, 1959) seems universal, the direction of aggression and desire, and the outcome, seem different in different cultures. We may explain away the Indian pattern as only a projection, a reversal, a transformation of the Greek one; or that Indian tales manifest a cultural repression (if one may speak of such) so deep that the killing of the father is entirely absent; or that the child projects its own desires (to rival, exile or kill the father, and to marry his own mother) on to his or her father or mother, as Freud found in his patients' 'screen-memories'. If that is the case, we still need to ask why it is that Indian tales are more like 'screen-memories' and the Greek one is so straightforward. Does this kind of pattern affect or reflect patterns of neurosis, repression, child-rearing, patterns of emotional development, social institutions? There is, for instance, less repression of 'the wish to be female' (Sinha 1967: 430) than in Western literature and religion: Indian poetry and Indian saints' lives are full of female identifications, transvestite imagery, etc. (Ramanujan 1976). One is often struck by the impression that Indian males repress their 'independence' as American males repress their 'dependence'. So, the predominant kinds of neuroses may be quite different in the two cultures and may need different emphases in therapy.

Indian conceptions of heroes and heroism are also quite different from the Greek or other European notions. Freud says, 'A hero is someone who has had the courage to rebel against his father and has in the end victoriously overcome him' (Freud 1937: 12). The modern Western quest is individuation, achieved through an overthrow of the father, whereas the Indian hero's quest is to fulfill his father, his family. Recent psychoanalysts (Roland 1980) have spoken of a Familial Self in the Indian personality. This medieval Kannada poem (Ramanujan 1973: 70) says it well:

> Don't make me hear all day
> "Whose man, whose man, whose man is this?"

Let me hear, "This man is mine, mine,
this man is mine."
O lord of the meeting rivers,
make me feel I'm a son of the house.

Furthermore, *both patterns exist in both cultures*, but different cultures emphasize different patterns through their *favourite* tales and psychologies. A traditional culture needs to use and absorb the vitality of the young, as Santanu had to use Bhīṣma's, Yayātī his son's. An innovative culture needs to overthrow its parents. If Indian family patterns change in their basic ways, its Oedipus tales may acquire new endings.

It is also clear both from the examples in this paper, and from a second look at Oedipus and Hamlet, that both kinds of Oedipal patterns — e.g., son overthrowing or killing father and father taking son's powers or life — are present often in the same stories. Bhīṣma willingly sacrifices his political and sexual potency to his father; but he also fights his guru Paraśurāma, and is later killed by his grand-nephew Arjuna (as Goldman points out). But what the Hindus remember, idealize, and retell over and over is the story of Bhīṣma's sacrifice (and other such stories).

In the Greek myth the father Laius is not innocent. He tries to mutilate and destroy infant Oedipus; he also assaults a younger man, Chrysippus, homosexually, and was therefore cursed to beget a son who would kill him and marry his own mother. But the celebrated story (especially seen through Sophocles' eyes earlier, and through Freud's later) is only that of Oedipus killing his father and marrying his mother. 'Laius and Oedipus both have an Oedipus complex', wrote Géza Róheim (Friedman and Jones 1963: 72). After writing the above, I discovered George Devereux's 'Why Oedipus killed Laius, a note on the complementary Oedipus complex in Greek drama' (1953). He speaks of the general neglect in psychoanalytic theory of the Laius complex and the Jocasta complex, two patterns that are greatly highlighted by the Indian tales. Such complementary patterns, Devereux suggests, are 'scotomized' because the adult (at this time) needs to 'place all responsibility for the Oedipus complex upon the child and to ignore, whenever possible, certain parental attitudes which actually stimulate the infant's oedipal tendencies'.

> The concept of the Laius and Jocasta complexes was even more egosyntonic and culturally objectionable than was the theory of the Oedipus complex, which, in a sense, merely confirmed the nineteenth-century adult's low opinion of children in general (Devereux 1953: 132).

I refer the reader to his excellent discussion of Laius the father. As for father-daughter relations, the Indian pattern is also clearly seen in the Lear-story (Dundes 1980). Though others (e.g., Ferenczi in 1932) in the western tradition have recognized it earlier, it is only in this decade that psychoanalysts are openly admitting to it:

> Seventy-five per cent of the girls we accept at the Villages have been molested in tender childhood by an adult. And that's today in Kansas! I don't think Vienna in 1900 was any less sophisticated,

says Dr Karl Menninger (quoted in *New York Times*, 25 August 1981). Witness also the recent interest in incest studies with titles like *Father's Days* (Brady 1979). *Books in Print 1981–82* lists 14 such titles. The mythology of a culture contains many patterns; the culture of a time and place chooses only some for literary, even psychoanalytic, elaboration.

Conclusion

Patterns similar to the favoured Indian one appear elsewhere in world mythology and folklore. In the intergenerational competition of parent and child, the outcome depends of course on family and other cultural patterns. In the Irish Cuchulain myth and in the Iranian epic about Sohrab and Rustum, fathers kill sons. (For several Iranian examples, see Baraheni 1977: 64–70.) Italian courtship practices and father-daughter relations as reported by Anne Parsons also show a partial 'Indian'-like pattern.

Other cultural patterns in India seem to corroborate the mythic and folk materials. A common Indian scandal-type (n.b. a new genre for folklorists) is that of the father getting his idiot or near-idiot son married to a young woman who becomes the old man's mistress. Nicholas (1979) reports similar stories from Bengali gossip. In the long history of India, there have been Hindu and Muslim dynasties. In Hindu history no major instance (to my lay mind) seems to be recorded where a son overthrows

or assassinates his father and usurps the throne. (Is this unconscious taboo so great that Hindu historians have repressed any such instances?) But in Muslim (Mughul and pre-Mughal) history, fathers or elder brothers are regularly imprisoned or assassinated by son or brother — it is almost a *rite de passage*, a ritual of succession. Some writers point to the rule of the elders in India, the general pattern of political gerontocracy, and even the long tolerance of foreign rule (noted by Spratt) as patterns that are too tempting to pass by. There are no Prometheus or Cronos figures overthrowing or defying the elder gods in Indian mythology. Would these patterns change and other patterns emerge (or be recognized) with changes in Indian family, child-rearing, economy and politics? I have no clear answer.

Furthermore, it is significant that Freud (with his overwhelming emphasis on the Greek 'positive' Oedipus-pattern) has received little attention or recognition till recently in Indian psychological circles which probably did not recognize his type of Oedipus-pattern as theirs at all.

Lastly the patterns persist and resonate through the modern Dravidian literatures I know. I shall give only two examples. In a long allegoric poem with 'modernity' itself for its theme, a Kannada poet C. Kambār adapts a folktale of his region. A village chief, the hero's father, is killed by a tiger-demon who returns to the village in the shape of the chief himself. The demon-father impregnates the hero's mother and, speaking from her womb, sends the hero out for impossible quests like tiger's milk, etc., to satisfy her pregnancy longings, till finally she asks him (or he, through her) for his five senses. At the end of the poem, the young heir is blind, deaf, and mute, unable to reach out for the elixir that would make him whole. Shankara Kurup's moving celebrated Malayālam poem, 'The Master Carpenter' (Perundaccan), speaks of the bitter rivalry of a father and the young talented son; the poem ends with the father killing the son by 'accidentally' dropping a chisel on him from above, while the son is working below him on the same pavilion (George 1968). The ancient story, where the father borrows the youth of his son, is a favourite among modern dramatists in Kannada. The persistent popularity of such themes in movie, novel, play and poem adds further weight to the dominant pattern presented here.

The next thing to do is to talk to a psychoanalyst who knows the Indic area, armed with a (Buddhist) passage like the following:

> Finally, as the time of the human being's death approaches he sees a bright light, and being unaccustomed to it at the time of his death he is perplexed and confused. He sees all sorts of things such as are seen in dreams, because his mind is confused. He sees his (future) father and mother making love, and seeing them a thought arises in him. If he is going to be reborn as a man he sees himself making love with his mother and being hindered by his father; or if he is going to be reborn as a woman, he sees himself hindered by his mother. It is at that moment that the Intermediate Existence is destroyed and life and consciousness arise and causality begins once more to work. It is like the imprint made by a die; the die is destroyed, but the pattern has been imprinted (Conze 1954: 283).

Notes

1. This paper is a revised and enlarged version of an earlier paper (1972). I have retained most of the examples, added counter-instances, and expanded the discussion further in the light of others' responses (e.g., Goldman 1978) and significant earlier papers (e.g. Devereux 1953) I discovered since 1972. The tale-types and motif-numbers are from the well-known indexes by Stith Thompson and his colleagues.
2. The notion of a child's 'life-script' written by a mother should be interesting to psychotherapists, especially of the Bernean persuasion. Resistance to a parent's injunction or suggestion and fulfilling it willy-nilly, as if under hypnosis, follows well-known patterns of compulsive behavior. There are also tales of 'outwitting Fate', about finding creative solutions by wisely using the very conditions laid down by Fate. For instance, it is written that a girl is fated to earn her living each night by selling her sexual favors. She is advised by a clever friend to ask for a bushel of pearls as payment for each night, so that no one but a divine being (Brahma Himself, who wrote her destiny) can be her lover; she is also advised to give it all away in charity the next day so that she ensures both her own *puṇya* (cumulative merit) and the certainty of the nightly visit by her divine lover (*Śāstri* 1968, also found in Kannada: Type 936).

   In contrast to the stories where a parent writes an adverse

fate for his child, one should also examine the many stories of a father or guru giving his son three or more precepts in Type 910. The precepts will be useful to him in crisis situations like his wedding night or when he is lost in strange places or chosen to be king or in the hour of danger. For instance, Type 910H-J Never Travel Without a Companion, Stay Awake, Never Plant a Moon Tree, seem to be special to India. Many of the parental precepts save the hero's life, especially on his wedding night. In these stories the bride has poisonous snakes which issue from her nostrils; in one, his companion, a crab, kills them; in another, he remembers and follows his father's precept to stay awake and so is able to kill the snakes and make his bride safe to live with. The Freudian gloss on the dangers of the 'first night' is obvious.

3. Folklore, here and elsewhere, uses common, uncensored, childhood beliefs. [The child] 'first supposes that children are made by mixing some special thing with the food taken; nor does he know that only women can have children. Later he learns of this limitation and gives up the idea of children being made by food, though it is retained in fairy-tales' (Freud 1920: 279.).

   For the confusion of sexual and alimentary channels, consider the American hospital joke about the nurse who swallowed a razor blade, and three doctors were circumcized as a result.

4. For Western examples of the incest-riddle lullaby, see Brewster 1972.

5. All these complex attitudes are explicit in this passage from the *Yogattatva Upanishad* (quoted by Kakar 1978: 95):

> That breast from which one sucked before he now presses and obtains pleasures. He enjoys the same genital organs from which he was born before. She was once his mother, will now be his wife, and she who is now wife, mother. He who is now father will be again son, and he who is now son will be again father.

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5

Fathers and Sons

Paul B. Courtright

The conflict between Śiva and Gaṇeśa at the threshold and the latter's subsequent submission and restoration introduce the theme of father/son aggression and invite comparison with the myth of Oedipus and the meaning Freud and his followers have derived from it for understanding human psychological dynamics.

The Oedipus story begins with Laius abandoning his infant son because an oracle predicts that his son will eventually murder him. But Oedipus survives and is raised as a prince in another kingdom. When he grows up, he searches for his origins and, in a chance encounter on the road, meets and slays Laius in an argument, not knowing Laius is his father. Later, arriving in Thebes, he solves the riddle of the sphinx and is made king; he marries his mother Jocasta and fathers two sons and daughters. For a while the kingdom prospers, but after a time a plague breaks out. The oracle prophesies that prosperity will not return until Laius' murderer is banished. After a long pursuit and many delays, Oedipus comes to know that he is the murderer of his father and the husband of his mother. Horrified at his own actions, Oedipus blinds himself and goes into exile, thus restoring the welfare of the kingdom and fulfilling the oracle of the gods.

Freud saw the truth of this myth in its dramatic expression of repressed childhood desires to bond with the mother and exclude the father. The myth directs 'our first sexual impulses toward the mother and our first hatred and our first murderous impulses against our father. Our dreams convince us that this is so' (Freud 1965: 262). This myth is powerful in ways others are not because

it gives narrative form to the 'first sexual impulses' at that very primal threshold of psychosexual development where such emotions are experienced with greatest intensity. The myth leads males, Freud thought, to identify with Oedipus' desire to express the infantile wish to be united with the mother but then are chastened by Oedipus' later agonies so that this desire is abandoned along with the related wish to murder the father. Only then do males accept identification with the father and seek sexual gratification in a mature, genitally erotic manner with another woman. For Freud (p. 296):

> [Oedipus] is one in whom these primaeval wishes of our childhood have been fulfilled, and we shrink back from them with the whole force of repression by which those wishes have since that time been held down within us.

In the myth and drama Oedipus is a tragic figure; in the fantasy there can be no fulfillment, only an acceptance of the inevitable reality of losing the mother and the subsequent identification with the father that makes it possible for the ego to develop adequately and realistically.

The similarities between the myths of Oedipus and Gaṇeśa from a psychoanalytic perspective have been noted by a number of scholars (Goldman: 371–2; Leach; Ramanujan; Spratt: 124–7, 350–1; cf. Courtright 1980: 75–7; O'Flaherty 1976: 361ff.). Robert Goldman (p. 371) summarizes the links between the two myths:

> The legend of Gaṇeśa, well known to the later purāṇic literature, is a much clearer example of a story representing the primal oedipal triangle of son, father, and mother and the son's attempts to possess the mother to the exclusion of the father, an attempt that leads to violent conflict and the final symbolic castration of the son.

The triangle of father, mother, and son, with the son's violent contest with the father over access to or possession of the mother, are clearly parallel in the Oedipus and Gaṇeśa stories. Unlike Oedipus, Gaṇeśa does not kill his father, he is himself killed, to be revived later with a new head. Ramanujan (p. 133) notes this important reversal in the flow of aggression:

> The Indian and Greek/Western tales do not differ in the basic pattern: (a) Like sexes repel, (b) Unlike sexes attract across generations. But

> they do differ in the *direction* of aggression or desire. Instead of sons desiring mothers and overcoming fathers (e.g., Oedipus) . . . we have fathers suppressing sons . . . and mothers desiring sons.

Another important difference in the direction of the myths is that although the Oedipus story directs us to the fundamentally tragic acceptance of the exile from the mother and submission to the superego demands represented by the father, gods, or fate, the Gaṇeśa story ends with his restoration and a new beginning in which relations between parents and child are reconciled. Gaṇeśa emerges with a new consciousness — symbolized by the new head — as the model devotee. He has borne all his misfortunes and mutilations as gifts of grace. The reward for his suffering is to receive eternal intimacy with the androgynous divinity represented by *both* his mother and father together. Iconographically he is most often represented with his father, or father and mother together, but seldom with his mother alone.

This resolution, however, is not without its price. From the psychoanalytic perspective, the symbolism of the threshold as the location where the battle occurs is significant. It is the threshold to Pārvatī's bath and bedroom, symbol of her shrine, womb, and point of sexual entry. It is the place simultaneously of union and separation. Gaṇeśa the child is coming out of the door at the moment Śiva the husband is attempting to get in. The doorway is not big enough for both of them at the same time; one must prevail, and, of course, it is the father. The resolution, at least initially, must fall in his favour. The particular type of mutilation Śiva inflicts on Gaṇeśa is also significant. As Robert Goldman points out in commenting on Gaṇeśa's beheading: 'This particular mode of displaced castration is a common feature of Hindu legends. Beheading is, moreover, a regular symbol for castration in dreams and fantasies' (pp. 371–2; cf. Freud: 366–9). In traditional Indian yogic physiology the head is the receptacle of both thought and sexual potency or seed. In Tantric descriptions of the process of spiritual liberation [*mokṣa*] the seed is drawn up from the sexual organs through various centers [*cakra*] along the spinal axis until it is released through an aperture at the top of the head [*brahmarandhra cakra* or *sahasrāra cakra*] (cf. O'Flaherty 1980: 47–61). In some versions of the myth where Gaṇeśa already has his elephantine

form, the 'displaced castration' takes place on an even more obvious surrogate, the tusk. In separating Ganeśa's head/tusk Śiva, or one of his stand-ins, removes any potential threat of incest and thereby leaves Gaṇeśa sexually ambiguous. Leach (p. 93) identifies the logic of such a structural resolution within the context of Śiva and Pārvatī's relationship in terms of Sāṁkhya principles of *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* (or cosmic sexuality):

> The male principle and the female principle stand opposed; a third principle (Ganesha), a kind of impersonalized sexuality, stands in the middle and serves both to unite and to separate. The combination of male-plus-female is fertile but if the outcome is a secondary complete male, then jealousy will separate what was united. The alternative male-plus-male is sterile, and the two males will be jealous over the possession of women. The myth offers a 'resolution' of the paradox. If male unites with female to produce a sterile offspring then the latter will serve as a mediation between the sexes instead of a source of hostility. The 'man in the middle' must be either no sex or sexes in alternation.

Although the myth may offer a resolution to (1) the psychoanalytic paradox of erotic attachment to the mother and murderous hatred for the father through resuscitation with a new head and (2) to the structural paradox by introducing Gaṇeśa as an asexual or sexually ambiguous figure between the two equally mighty and opposed embodiments of feminine procreative and masculine ascetic powers, it remains uncomfortable about portraying Śiva in such an unflattering light as a father. To camouflage the full force of Śiva's mutilating actions, the myth displaces the deed onto various surrogates: Śani, Paraśurāma, a curse, the actions of fate, and Śiva's ignorance that Gaṇeśa is his son. Similarly, when Ganeśa does battle with Śiva, he is also ignorant of Śiva's true identity and takes him to be an anonymous intruder even though Śiva shouts at him, 'Fool, don't you know who I am? I am none other than Śiva!' (Śiva Purāṇa 2.5.13.33). Thus they both act out their aggressions unaware of each other's true identities. As a narrative device in the myth, the characters' mutual ignorance corresponds to the themes of forgetting and repression in psychoanalytic theory; once the son has become socialized into his identity through identification with the father, he forgets or represses his desire for the mother and his hostility toward the father. In the myth, when Gaṇeśa comes to understand that Śiva

is his father — a recognition he acquires only after receiving a new head from his father — he accepts his role as the Lord of Obstacles, becomes a yogi and a dancer (like his father), and takes up various weapons to guard the doorway for both his parents to protect their intimacy from unwanted intruders.

However much the myth may want to cover up or displace the violence inherent in Śiva and Gaṇeśa's confrontation, the logic of the story requires that the rupture between them take place. Śiva must get past the doorkeeper. Pārvatī must not be allowed to remain aloof from the world and create without male participation of some kind. The lord must unite with his *śakti*. In the same way, at the entrance to the shrine, the devotee must risk doing battle with the explicit and hidden forces of external pollution and internal resistances to faith and press on into the innermost part of the shrine to experience the awesome grace inherent in contact with the deity presence. A similar logic obtains in the realm of ritual and social life. In the rite of *upanayana* the *ācārya* must sustain the tradition by breaking the childhood attachments of the initiate and make him into a new being, born again into a male world that is linked to the past through text, sacred speech, and gesture. It is a necessity, the proper order [*dharma*] of things that this process take place. The father must take the boy out of the domestic world of women and introduce him to the world of men, this public realm of work and politics, the arena of the superego function, just as his father did for him and so on back into the ancestral past.

There is displacement of another sort in the myth also, this time seen in Pārvatī's role in Gaṇeśa's mutilation and restoration. When she creates him and stations him at the door, she exposes him to inevitable danger. What need is there of a guard unless you are expecting trouble? She tells him he must remain there admitting no one; no exception. In another version of the story, when Śani resists looking at Gaṇeśa because of the curse he is under that anything he looks on will be destroyed, Pārvatī mocks him and forces him to look at her son. Her complicity in her son's dismemberment suggests a more subtle ambivalence than the one we noted with Śiva. It is as though she has to expose him to his inevitable fate, just as the mother of the *brahmacārin* must turn her son over to the *ācārya*, and the psyche must see the mother as less than absolutely benevolent. Pārvatī is a

'good' mother because she loves her son tenderly and defends him against the father's violence; she is a 'bad' mother, in that she exposes him to danger and gives him an impossible task to perform. But the myth is as uncomfortable about admitting her complicity in Gaṇeśa's beheading as it is with Śiva's naked aggression. It attempts to diffuse the force of the events onto a wider set of powers and persons. When viewed in relation to the dynamics of the traditional Hindu extended family, the myth finds a structural parallel. In a family organization that contains multiple parental surrogates, the forces of infantile desire are not placed in overdetermined ways on the mother and father alone; instead they are scattered among a number of adults, leaving the child with the feeling that the pains of maturation rest with forces larger than those of the mother and father.

For Gaṇeśa there is no final death, only a temporary rupture. Śiva puts him back together in the only form in which he can exist in the world. As with the sacrifice he completes Gaṇeśa even as he destroys him. The hand that rends is the hand that mends. The story has a happy ending: when Gaṇeśa is restored and given primacy of place before all the gods, Śiva and Pārvatī are reunited, death is rationalized away, and there is opportunity for a new beginning.

After Śiva has restored Gaṇeśa with the head of an elephant, he confers on him various powers and privileges. The stories vary in details, but the pattern is important. After embracing him, performing the proper rites of childbirth, and giving him weapons, Śiva initiates Gaṇeśa into his new duties. In some versions of the story Gaṇeśa's *dharma* is to protect the status quo. Śiva speaks:

> 'My son, you are born in order to destroy the demons and help the gods and Brahmins who teach the Vedas. Stand there in the path that leads to heaven and create obstacles in the rites of whoever has sacrifices performed but fails to pay the priests' fee.' (*Linga Purāṇa* 105.14–16; cf. *Skanda Purāṇa* 1.2.27.7–14)

Other versions of the story have Gaṇeśa create obstacles for the gods or for Śiva's own devotees, who are seeking entry into heaven through Śiva's shrine and crowding out the gods (SkP 7.1.38.1–34; *Vāmana Purāṇa* 27.72). This pattern of Gaṇeśa's ambivalent behavior at the threshold links him with the actions of demons and will be examined in more detail later.

In the divine scheme of things Gaṇeśa does not win recognition for battling heroically against the superior might of Śiva, but rather receives his titles and powers as a reward for submitting to Śiva. This submission theme emerges particularly clearly when Gaṇeśa allows Śiva's axe to fall on his tusk rather than to deny obedience to his father's weapon, the symbol of his authority. Śiva is forced by the power inherent in Gaṇeśa's renunciation, and with no small amount of prodding from Pārvatī, to recognize Gaṇeśa as his son and reward him with the symbols of the son and disciple. In the battle with Śiva, Gaṇeśa wins by losing. It is a passive-aggressive strategy and Gaṇeśa's submission coerces his father's generosity.

Parallels can be observed at the level of ritual performance and infantile fantasy. In the rite of *upanayana*, the *brahmacārin* submits to fasting, separation, shaving, and so on, and the *ācārya* gives him his staff and clothing, adopts him, and gives him his ritual name and instruction. The final stage in the resolution of the Indian variation of the oedipal situation comes with the identification of the son with the father, but for Indian males this identification is absolute, especially as it occurs in the relationship of the disciple to the guru. Carstairs comments, 'When confronted with this complete surrender the deity, the father and the Guru are compelled to offer help; the tyranny of early childhood reasserts itself' (p. 160). This new father/son, guru/disciple, *ācārya/brahmacārin* relationship creates a new bond of affection in the context of absolute domination by the authority figure and utter dependence of the disciple. The sexual nuances of this relationship are well hidden, but it is significant that in the myth Śiva gives Gaṇeśa his weapons and in the ritual the *ācārya* gives the *brahmacārin* the ascetic's staff [*yogadaṇḍa*] — symbols, like the broken tusk, of the detached phallus. Carstairs notes further, 'There is also a powerfully repressed homosexual fixation on the father. This is shown . . . in indirect and sublimated form, in a man's feeling toward his Guru — in one context in which a warm affectionate relationship (although a passive and dependent one) is given free expression' (ibid.).

An important element in the symbolism of the elephant head is displacement or, better, disguise. The myth wants to make it appear that the elephant head was not a deliberate choice but merely the nearest available head in an auspicious direction or the

head of one of Śiva's opponents to whom he had already granted salvation. But, from a psychoanalytic perspective, there is meaning in the selection of the elephant head. Its trunk is the displaced phallus, a caricature of Śiva's *liṅga*. It poses no threat because it is too large, flaccid, and in the wrong place to be useful for sexual purposes. In the myth of the broken tusk, Śiva does not restore it but leaves it for Gaṇeśa to carry around and to use occasionally as a weapon or a writing instrument. The elephant head is also a mask, and, as it is a mask's purpose simultaneously to reveal and conceal, it both disguises and expresses the aggression inherent in the story. So Gaṇeśa takes on the attributes of his father but in an inverted form, with an exaggerated limp phallus — ascetic and benign — whereas Śiva is 'hard' [*ūrdhvaliṅga*], erotic, and destructive.

Ganeśa's characteristics mirror those of his father. In contrast to the erotic/heroic lord of creatures, Śiva-Paśupati, Ganesa is the celibate/passive animal-headed lord. When Śiva is bold, Gaṇeśa is meek; but when Śiva stands powerless before an obstacle — as he does before the righteous King Divodāsa who rules over Śiva's longed-for city of Kāśī — it is Gaṇeśa who overcomes the obstacle (as we shall see). Leach (p. 82; cf. Beck 1974: 11) comments on this structure of relations:

> The sexual qualities which are attributed to Ganesha depend upon context and, generally speaking, are the opposite of those attributed to his father. . . . As Shiva varies so also Ganesha varies, but in the inverse direction.

The inverse variations Gaṇeśa exhibits in relation to Śiva carry beyond those of sexual identity into the realms of physical form and action, where these identities are displayed and played out.

The theological message of the Śiva/Gaṇeśa, *ācārya/brahmacārin*, father/son pattern can be summarized in this way: submit that you may be saved, be destroyed that you may be made whole. The sacrificial violence is not the tragic conclusion, but the necessary beginning of a passage into a new order where renunciation of the self makes affirmation from the other possible, where transforming yourself into an offering to the deity induces the god to give you rebirth into this world. The god who breaks you makes you; destruction and creating ultimately spring from the same source. Personal fulfillment comes when personal idiosyncratic

attachments give way to acceptance of the transpersonal divine order, an order made apparent only at the moment in which the particular self surrenders itself. The Maharashtrian poet-saint Tukārāma expressed this theological vision succinctly (*Tukārāma Gāthā* 1950: no. 3414, 3171):

If we want to enjoy God,
we should lop off our head from our body
and hold it in our hands
. . . .
when the body has been sacrificed to god, says Tukā,
all worship has been accomplished.

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6

Further Steps in Relativization: The Indian Oedipus Revisited

Gananath Obeyesekere

In an exceptionally important essay, 'The Indian Oedipus', Ramanujan helps us relativize further the Freudian Oedipus complex.[1] Ramanujan's thesis is that the Greek form of the complex is very scarce in India, but though the Indian cases show real substantive difference from the Western, they exhibit identity on the level of structure. I find the structural argument misleading, since it once again binds us into a universal Oedipus, which is contradicted by Ramanujan's own plea for placing the Oedipus complex in the context of varying familial relationships in different cultures. The family drama in the Indian household, according to him, is quite different from the Western, and consequently a different representation of the Oedipus complex occurs there.

He begins his paper with a startling story related by a half-blind old woman in a village in North Karnataka.

A girl is born with a curse on her head that she would marry her own son and beget a son by him. As soon as she hears of the curse, she willfully vows she'd try and escape it: she secludes herself in a dense forest, eating only fruit, forswearing all male company. But when she attains puberty, as fate would have it, she eats a mango from a tree under which a passing king has urinated. The mango impregnates her; bewildered, she gives birth to a male child; she wraps him in a piece of her sari and throws him in a nearby stream. The child is picked up by the king of the next kingdom, and he grows up to be a handsome young adventurous prince. He comes hunting in the self-same jungle, and the cursed woman falls in love with the stranger,

telling herself she is not in danger any more as she has no son alive. She marries him and bears a child. According to custom, the father's swaddling clothes are preserved and brought out for the newborn son. The woman recognizes at once the piece of sari with which she had swaddled her first son, now her husband, and understands that her fate had really caught up with her. She awaits till everyone is asleep, and sings a lullaby to her newborn baby:

Sleep
O son
O grandson
O brother to my husband
sleep O sleep
sleep well

and hangs herself by the rafter with her sari twisted to a rope.[2]

In this text 'it is the mother, the Jocasta figure, who is accursed, tries to escape her fate, and when finally trammeled in it, it is she who makes the discovery and punishes herself with death'.[3] Once again, says Ramanujan, the structure is the same as the Greek but the narrative point of view is exactly in reverse. Though a tragic Jocasta-type figure emerges in the preceding story, not so with the many variations around the key elements of the myth: the prophecy, the nature of impregnation with all sorts of bodily exuviae through different body apertures, the lullaby, and the conclusion. In some there is humor (the absurdity of it all!); in others the protagonists accept their fate and live happily ever after. All these tales have been told by elderly women; it expresses their point of view ranging from the tragic to the ludicrous. One must also not assume that one version excludes another: it is possible for the same person or the same village to relate different versions of the same myth. The parody can coexist with the tragic vision, as it does in Shakespearean tragedy in the voice of the Fool.

The power of the mother-son tie has been noted by almost everyone familiar with Hindu society. The dependency of the son on the mother and the erotic ties that bind them together are not only significant in childhood but continue into adulthood.[4] In many versions the father is excluded from the relationship.

There is a recurrent motif in folktales in South India and elsewhere (Motif J. 21.2): A father returns from a long exile or journey and enters his bedroom to find a strange young man sleeping next to his

wife. He draws his sword to kill them both, when either his waking wife or a remembered precept ('Don't act when angry') stays his hand. The young man is really his son grown to *manhood during his long absence but still sleeping innocently in* the same bed as his dear mother.[5]

In an earlier version of his paper, Ramanujan noted the virtual absence of parricide in the Indian Oedipus; rather the brunt of literally hundreds of myths and folktales are focussed on the killing of the son by the father.[6] Once again owing to a radical overvaluation of blood relations, to use Lévi-Strauss' phrase, there is a reversed aggression from father to son, the opposite of the Greek model.[7] In all of these myths, the son is killed, maimed, castrated (symbolically or actually) by the father. The myth that paradigmatically expresses the Hindu Oedipus is that of Gaṇeśa, to be discussed later. In the triangular relationship expressed in that myth, the son has no chance. Bad enough to be pampered by the mother; worse to suffer the father's anger and sexual jealousy that brooks little compromise, at least initially.

In another cluster of myths, dealt with at great length by Goldman, the father's sexuality and power of domination are both emphasized.[8] In the ideal-typical myth, that of Yayāti found in the *Mahābhārata*, the father asks his several sons to give up their sexuality for his (the father's) own lost potency. The elder sons refuse, and they are banished, killed, or castrated, while the youngest willingly agrees. In these myths, the unquestioning subservience of the son to the father's patripotestal authority is as significant as sexuality. The sons must not only unquestionably yield to the father's authority, but they must also renounce their own sexuality. Transgression and disobedience must result in the frightening and irrational wrath of the father. Goldman quotes a wonderful myth from the *Rāmāyaṇa* where the king of the gods, Indra, seduces the wife of the Brahmin sage, Gautama. Indra noted Gautama's absence from his ashram and took the sage's physical form to have intercourse with the latter's wife, Ahalyā. Ahalyā sees through the disguise but, smitten by love for the god, she agrees. But after making love Indra is frightened, possessed of an almost childlike fear of the sage (a father figure in Indian thought), and slinks away, 'terrified of Gautama'. When at last he meets the sage, Indra stands with his face lowered. The sage knows what has happened and curses the god: 'Fool! Since

you, taking my appearance, have done this forbidden thing, you shall be deprived of your testicles'. And of course Indra's balls fall to the ground![9]

When Ramanujan first wrote on the Indian Oedipus in 1972, Goldman responded with his impressive and scholarly article showing that, contrary to Ramanujan, the Hindu epics contained references to the 'positive' Oedipus complex of the West, in addition of course to the typical Indian form. In summarizing the data from the epics, Goldman showed that there are three basic versions of the oedipal conflict.

1. The 'positive' Oedipus complex where the son kills his father. However, there is only one case in the epic literature where the actual son kills his own father — that of Arjuna and Babhruvāhana, to be discussed later. In others, a son or surrogate son attacks a father figure, but there are only about three of these in the epic literature.[10] One of the most famous is where Arjuna kills Bhīṣma; Bhīṣma, however, is not Arjuna's father but a kind of grandfather to him as head of the clan of the Bhāratas.[11]

2. The second is a much more common, yet disguised, version of the positive Oedipus complex. Here a character in the epic launches an attack on a surrogate father (or mother) — such as a *guru*, an elder brother, or a Brahmin. In Indian languages the terms for *guru* and father are interchangeable, so that Goldman's thesis could be borne out. But the other cases are more problematic. It may well be that the hatred for the elder brother is a displacement from the father, but insofar as the elder brother is a kind of father substitute in the Hindu joint family, he may well be an independently significant member of the child's circle of infantile objects. And how does one disentangle caste resentment of Brahmins from the oedipal conflict, since the former seems as intrinsic to Hindu culture as the latter? In some cases Goldman sensitively disentangles the oedipal elements by tracing in the epics the past history or sequel of the displaced oedipal conflicts; and he shows that the paternal, filial, or maternal relationships displaced in one version reappear in the historical prologue or epilogue. But in other places it is impossible to disentangle the oedipal conflict from other conflicts endemic to the society.

3. The last type is where the heroic son anticipates and avoids the Oedipal conflict with the father 'by submitting to the father's will and in effect castrating himself'.[12] These heroes are never

punished, but are instead rewarded by their fathers. If we transfer this idea to the myths of filicide noted by Ramanujan we can formulate a tentative (yet unprovable) conclusion. If the son who emasculates himself and yields to the father is *not* punished, then the son who is punished is one who fails to yield. Gaṇeśa, for example, is too attached to the mother to yield pliantly to the father: he must therefore be decapitated and rendered ugly, and made subservient to the father's will. The third type discussed by Goldman is similar to the 'typical' Indian Oedipus discussed by Ramanujan. Both types of sons are defeated by the father and in this sense stand opposed to the Western model. Goldman takes exception to Ramanujan's thesis that only third type myths are found in India but agrees with Ramanujan that the latter is the dominant Hindu form. 'The legends of the third type, or to be more precise, the heroes of these legends occupy a special place in the hearts of Hindu India. These heroes are by no means the only ones worthy of the title "Indian Oedipus", but they are without doubt representative of an oedipal type the culture strongly favors.'[13]

The fact of the matter is that Goldman is hard put to find myths in the epic literature that unequivocally parallel the Greek model, even in respect of the father-son relationship. There is only one story — that of Babhruvāhana and Arjuna — 'the only unambiguous example of parricide that I can find in the Sanskrit epic literature'.[14] In this story that appears at the end of the *Mahābhārata*, Arjuna, the great hero of the epic, wanders all over the territory with the sacrificial horse of his elder brother, the just Yudhiṣṭhira. The custom is that the territory into which the horse wanders must submit to the king who is to make the sacrifice, or offer battle to those who escort it. The horse eventually enters the realm of Manipur ruled by Babhruvāhana, Arjuna's own son. Now Babhruvāhana must either surrender (a cowardly act) or fight his own father (an ethically horrendous act). Babhruvāhana decides on the former and respectfully approaches his father. But Arjuna is enraged at this pitiful display of filial piety and affection! He unleashes a torrent of verbal abuse at his son as a coward and a violator of kingly ethics. But even so Babhruvāhana cannot act hostilely towards his father until he is urged to do so by the serpent princess Ulūpī, a stepmother to him in kinship terms (and psychically a mother).

The father and son fight, and the son scores the first shot. Arjuna is seriously injured and appears to be dead, but he regains consciousness and praises his son for his heroism. The battle then recommences, and Babhruvāhana finally shoots his father in the heart and kills him. Babhruvāhana is stricken with guilt and proposes to expiate it by living for twelve years clothed with his father's skin and begging for alms, using his father's skull as begging bowl. But none of this is necessary, for Ulūpī tells him that nothing can kill his father. She revives Arjuna with the restorative snake jewel she possesses, and son, father, and father's wife are all happily reconciled.[15]

While it is perhaps true that the 'parricide and the horror of it are hardly concealed' in the Babhruvāhana myth, it is also the case that the father does not in fact die. Goldman says:

> Most notable is the great effort expended on the attempt to deny the significance and even the existence of its central event, Babhruvāhana's murder of his father. The son is represented as entertaining no hostility for the father. He fights him only as an act of filial devotion to his father and 'mother'. Finally, in a welter of confused and even contradictory rationalization we are told that (1) the battle was staged to please the father, (2) the murder was arranged to save the father from hell, (3) the father killed himself, and finally, (4) the father was not killed at all, the whole affair being nothing but a conjurer's trick.[16]

If this is the one case of the positive Oedipus complex, it still remains quite remote from the Greek. This one case, and other disguised ones, are hardly enough evidence to formulate an 'Indian Oedipus' on the Western model. Goldman insightfully notes:

> What these stories show, however, is that in almost every case in which this struggle is worked out between a son and his actual father in the Sanskrit epic literature it is the latter who succeeds. Actual sons are, if good sons, passive to the point of self-destruction and are rewarded for their passivity and subservience. If they are bad they are passively disobedient and are degraded as punishment for their sins. The latter case, moreover, exists largely to serve as a contrast to the former. In neither case are they actually aggressive to their father, nor do they ever gain unimpeded access to the goals of maturity, independence and the free expression of sexuality.[17]

The family relations that underlie the reversed Oedipus complex in India, then, have two conspicuous features. The first, already noted, is the erotic-nurturant bond that binds mother and son. These myths recount the mother's erotic seduction of her son or her sexual relationship with him. Once again eroticism is compounded by a key feature of Hindu family relationship — the domination of the mother. In the reversed relationship between the father and son there is a different form of domination, the patripotestal authority of the father and the unquestioning loyalty of the son. Failure in yielding to the father results in social degradation, emasculation, death, or mutilation.

The father-son relationship in the Indian situation seems to be the very opposite of that in the Trobriand. The role of the father is parallel to that of the mother's brother in Trobriand; each is related to a certain type of authority structure in the family. Unlike the maternal uncle of Trobriand the Hindu father is a live presence. His authority is part of the Hindu patriarchal joint family, as much as the mother's brother in the matriarchal system. Furthermore, the Hindu father-son relationship is governed by religious norms; for example the view that the son is necessary for the performance of the funeral rites for the father. The idea is also widespread that the father may be reborn as the son, even though it contradicts any ethically based view of karma. The religious sanction given to filial piety is absent in Trobriand; there the mother's brother could be symbolically slain. Not so in Hindu India. The myths recounted in Ramanujan's and Goldman's essays are not just Indian oedipal myths but also edifying tales that are related in a variety of contexts and act as myth models for both emulation and warning. The Hindu son of the epics has little chance of killing the father; it is the father, jealous of his rival's erotic attachment to the mother, who slays the son. Not in all myths is the son totally passive; in popular Gaṇeśa myths, both folk and classical, the son tries to assert himself, but he is inevitably worsted in the confrontation with the father.

In the context of Hindu familial relationships, can one reasonably speak of a universal Oedipus complex — the Greek model — that then, through various symbolic mechanisms (especially displacements), is expressed in the kind of mythic representations presented earlier? Goldman follows the classic Freudian argument that there is everywhere a positive Oedipus complex and that the

Hindu is but a transformation of it. But the Hindu son is in fact born into a family system where these relationships are pregiven. If so it is meaningless to speak of a set of infantile relationships paralleling the Western model, since no such relationships exist (except in unusual and individual cases). Thus the Oedipus complex in the Indian family must be structured in terms of these pregiven relationships, rather than in terms of a nonexistent Western model. The Greek Oedipus can hardly exist in the Hindu joint family; even if he does exist in an individual example he rarely survives as a mythic representation.

If this line of reasoning is correct then the whole development of the Indian Oedipus complex, as a psychic structure, and not just as a myth model, must take a different form from the Western one. It needs Indian psychoanalysts to deal with this problem through case studies. However, I shall present one likely Indian Oedipal problem, based on its own family relationships — the psychosexual problems that arise out of the son's symbiotic tie with the mother.

Talcott Parsons argued that in the Western family the universally operative mother-son ties must be eventually terminated. The father must yank the son out of the erotic dependency with the mother, thereby acting both as father and as the representative of the larger society.[18] Parsons also universalized this model but did not recognize that this was not only uniquely Western, but also had a socioeconomic dimension in Western individualism and capitalism. It is the nuclear family structure, and the individualistic work ethic based on capitalism, that makes the father the agent of the society in the family. He helps the son to break loose from the erotic dependency on the mother and pitchforks him into the competitive world outside. This socioeconomic background of the contemporary Western Oedipus complex does not obtain in India — at least until recently. The focus is on the welfare of the patrilineal joint family and the larger institutions of the society — caste and the political order — that together conspire to suppress individualism (if not individuality) in the interests of the collectivity. Kakar, following Erikson, has labelled these internalized norms as the 'communal conscience'.[19] In this situation, the unity of the joint family, as I pointed out in the previous section, rests on two axes of control — the affective ties binding the individual to his family through the nurturant and

erotic dependency of the son on the mother continuing into adulthood; and the patripotestal authority of the father, the repository of the religiously based values of the Hindu family and larger society. Thus the emotional relationships in the family are linked to the suppression of individualism, the unity of the joint family and larger supra-individual structures such as caste, and the religious values on which these are grounded.

Unlike the Western model, the son cannot affirm his separation and individuation from either parent because of the nature of the emotional ties involved and the socioeconomic forces that reciprocally feed into those ties. One might therefore guess that both neuroses as well as the resolution of the complex must have a reality intrinsic to the Indian pattern. In neuroses one must expect symbiotic ties to the mother, which cannot be individually or symbolically controlled or sublimated, to produce a variety of psychological problems, as, for example, sexual impotence and inadequacy. But these are in turn reinforced, or exacerbated, in the relationship with the father. The anthropologist can do little to document these, which belong to the field of clinical psychoanalysis, but he can help reformulate the Oedipus complex and the neuroses that might result from the child's relationship with his parents in specifically Indian terms. Above all the anthropologist, with his concern for cultural values, might provide some insights regarding the *resolution* of the Indian Oedipus complex. Here also we can take a hint from the Western model of Oedipus which in Freudian thought mythicized the childhood fantasy. In this, the son marries the mother and overthrows the father and replaces him psychologically in the affections of the mother and displaces him sociologically by usurping the paternal role. In Hindu myth the son is erotically dominated by the mother and is under the father's authoritarian rule. How then can he assume his father's role, at age five or thereabouts, identify with him and replace him and become the bearer of his father's values and the values of the society? One of the most powerful myth models, so powerful that one can label it paradigmatic of the Indian oedipal conflict and its resolution, provides us with the answer. The son must submit to the father; by submission the son has the father's love and forgiveness (for attachment to the mother?). *Identification through submission* might even capitalize on a homosexual and a phylogenetic propensity; this is the dominant Hindu form of

oedipal resolution, rather than identification through the dethronement (metaphorically 'killing') of the father. It is a mechanism of defence specific to Hindu society, permitting the son to introject the parental value system and simultaneously resolve the oedipal crisis. He duplicates the father, instead of replacing him. This is the psychological counterpart to the popular Hindu belief that the father can be reborn as the son's son and the son might once have been the father.

Attempts by the son to possess the mother and usurp the father's role are totally non-normative and reprehensible: any thought of this will result in direct and fearful reprisal from the father, as in the myth of Indra's emasculation or the decapitation of Gaṇeśa by Śiva. The Western oedipal reaction is a rare alternative; the only other way of affirming one's autonomy *over* and above the father's value system is by a radical avoidance of the father, or by a total rejection of the parental values by becoming an outcaste and introjecting a totally new value system. Running away from home is in fact a well-known, if not normatively sanctioned, code of conduct. Though scholars have focussed only on one form of this — ascetic renunciation — this is by no means the adolescent (or later adult) reaction to the unbearable presence, psychic and physical, of the father. Other alternatives are less well known in the literature: joining semicaste or guild organizations of criminals, or homosexual groups like Hinjras, or deliberately joining outcaste groups. Further possibilities also exist: joining the military, or monastic orders like Jainas and Tantrics that accept youthful recruits, or Hindu groups like Lingayats that have a relatively open policy of recruitment, and I am sure many other alternatives not documented by scholars.

Freud and the Indian Oedipus: An Imaginary Journey

It was *The Ego and the Id*, published in 1923, that fully developed the second topography of the ego, superego, and id.[20] This important work contains one of the simplest and clearest statements of the Oedipus complex as far as the male child is concerned.

> In its simplified form the case of the male child may be described as follows: At a very early age the little boy develops an object-cathexis for his mother, which originally related to the mother's breast and is

the prototype of an object choice on the anaclitic model; the boy deals with his father by identifying himself with him. For a time these two relationships proceed side by side, until the boy's sexual wishes in regard to his mother become more intense and his father is perceived as an obstacle to them; from this the Oedipus complex originates. His identification with his father then takes an hostile coloring and changes into a wish to get rid of his father in order to take his place with his mother. Henceforth his relation to his father is ambivalent; it seems as if the ambivalence inherent in the identification from the beginning had become manifest. An ambivalent attitude to the father and an object-relation of a solely affectionate kind to his mother make up the content of the simple positive Oedipus complex in a boy.

Along with the demolition of the Oedipus complex, the boy's object-cathexis of his mother must be given up. Its place may be filled by one of two things: *either an identification with his mother or an intensification of his identification with his father. We are accustomed to regard the latter outcome as the more normal*; it permits the affectionate relation to the mother to be in a measure retained. In this way the dissolution of the Oedipus complex would consolidate the masculinity in the boy's character.[21]

In this very important statement Freud recognizes that identification with the mother might well be one form of the resolution of the Oedipus complex. It does not seem too radical to suggest that the identification with the father and the consolidation of masculinity is the one Freud was 'accustomed to' because it was the personally and culturally operative and acceptable form. But imagine Freud working with Indian patients and confronted with myths dealing with filicide and symbiosis with the mother. In these circumstances Freud would most likely have made the inference that Indians were 'accustomed to' an oedipal identification with the mother in the resolution of their complex. He might even have considered submission to the father as a reasonable Indian form. Freud, however, was barely acquainted with Hinduism. He was only aware of the fact that, even in Western culture, identification with the mother was a possible scenario. For Freud this alternative pattern of identification was due to constitutional bisexuality: 'the relative strength of the masculine and feminine sexual dispositions is what determines whether the outcome of the Oedipus situation shall be an identification with the father or with the mother.'[22] Reverse identification, however,

does not occur solely in respect of the mother. He says that 'the simple Oedipus complex' quoted earlier is good enough for 'practical purposes', but constitutional bisexuality produces in addition 'an effeminate feminine attitude to the father and a corresponding jealousy and hostility to the mother'. The Oedipus complex is much more complex than the simple triangular relationship where the son hates the father and loves the mother!

One might of course argue that the preceding account pertains to the resolution of the Oedipus complex and not the complex itself — if one can make this somewhat artificial distinction. But the matter isn't all that simple, as is evident in the development of Freud's argument. 'It may even be that the ambivalence displayed in the relations to the parents should be attributed entirely to bisexuality and that it is not, as I have represented above, developed out of identification in consequence of rivalry.'[23] If constitutional bisexuality could channel the way identification and the oedipal feelings of ambivalence to parents develop, is it then not reasonable to suggest that in another time or place, cultural conditions could as easily affect or aggravate the direction of identification and ambivalence?

Now let our fantasy transgress normal bounds and imagine Freud, not in Vienna, but in Delhi as an Indian doctor working with Hindu neurotics. There is no Sophoclean myth here; instead there is the Gaṇeśa myth, to be discussed soon, and related ones discussed earlier. The Greek myth, owing to its absence, would be irrelevant for Freud. Hindu patients, he would note, have wish-fulfillment dreams of submitting to the father and marrying a mother figure. There might be rare cases of father killing, but more normative and frequent are the many dreams, expressed in many guises, of the son being worsted (killed, castrated) by the father. What interpretive choice would Freud have had? Is it likely that he would have independently formulated, and foisted on the Indians, the Greek model of the Oedipus complex in the face of a different body of data? I think not. He would have had little choice but to formulate the positive form of the Indian 'Oedipus' complex in terms of the Indian clinical and mythological data, i.e., in terms of identification with the mother and submission to the father. He would also have noted that this situation would result in the male developing feminine characteristics — enhanced of course by constitutional bisexuality!

Freud, however, never retracted his view of the triangular nature of the Oedipus complex. Yet this did not exhaust erotic attraction among family members. In his 1922 paper on jealousy, paranoia, and homosexuality he speaks of the normal jealousy that 'originates in the Oedipus or brother-sister complexes of the first sexual period'.[24] Here he clearly recognizes the existence of both oedipal and sibling complexes — another way of saying that empirically *all* familial kin are erotically desired. In addition to this Freud noted the power of homosexual fantasies among familial members, especially in his great case studies.[25] In 1931, he recognized the importance of homosexuality in girls in their phallic stage.[26] This contained 'active wishful impulses' towards the mother, but he was not sure whether it had a sexual aim — a somewhat strange statement since Freud says on the previous page, in relation to the *passive* impulses of the phallic stage, that girls 'regularly accuse their mothers of seducing them'.[27] And as for the pre-oedipal stage in both boys and girls, he could say: 'We have as yet no clear understanding of these processes, with which we have only just become acquainted.'[28]

In *The Ego and the Id*, Freud noted that the female Oedipus complex was the exact parallel of the male.[29] But in 1931, in his paper on female sexuality, he thought otherwise — once again illustrating the sense of doubt regarding even the fundamental principles that underlie the Oedipus complex and expressing the need for constant vision and revision. Here Freud initially admits that there is little doubt regarding the male Oedipus complex. But 'with the small girl it is different. Her first object, too, was her mother. How does she find her way to her father? How, when, and why does she detach himself from her mother?'[30] Again doubt: 'The way in which these two tasks are connected with each other is not yet clear to us.'[31]

In this paper he talks of the 'many women who have a strong attachment to their father' and yet may not be neurotic.[32] This is based on a strong pre-oedipal attachment to the mother 'in a very rich and many-sided manner' and could last up to even four years.[33] Insofar as this phase permits all sorts of fixations and repressions to develop, he asks whether it forces us to 'retract the universality of the thesis that the Oedipus complex is the nucleus of the neuroses'.[34] Freud reassures us; there is no need for this. 'On the one hand, we can extend the content of the Oedipus

complex to include all of the child's relation to both parents; or, on the other, we can take due account of our new findings by saying that the female only reaches the normal positive Oedipus situation after she has surmounted a period before it that is governed by the negative complex.'[35]

These important new findings in respect of female sexuality were for Freud momentous ones, analogous to the discovery of the Minoan-Mycenian civilization as a precursor of the Greek. Here also he tried to salvage the female Oedipus complex by postulating positive and negative phases — but their chronological order is reversed in the psychosexual development of the sexes. In women, the negative complex precedes the positive; in men it is the other way around. 'We have, after all, long given up any expectation of a neat parallelism between male and female sexual development.'[36]

It is clear that female sexuality was a troublesome problem for Freud, not only owing to its intrinsic difficulty but also because it rendered problematic the whole issue of oedipal relationships. Regarding the manner in which girls respond to the threat of castration and the prohibition on masturbation, he says: 'In truth, it is hardly possible to give a description which has general validity. We find the most different reactions in different individuals, and in the same individual contrary attitudes exist side by side.'[37]

Though Freud tried to solve these difficulties, and the others listed earlier, by postulating constitutional bisexuality and the two phases of the Oedipus complex, one can also read this paper as a kind of unwitting deconstruction of the Oedipus complex. The idea of the negative complex discovered so late in his career effectively demolished any simplistic notion of the Oedipus complex. The oedipal relationships now can be governed by love for the parent of the opposite sex and hate for the parent of the same sex (positive Oedipus complex); *and* it includes love for the parent of the same sex and hatred for the parent of the opposite sex (the negative complex). Add homosexuality and the sibling complex and what we have is, in my phrase, an 'erotically desirable circle of familial kin'.[38] Within this circle each culture (or some cultures) isolate in their fantasy lives a group of kin that are significant for the neuroses. These are the 'oedipal' kin; and the complex that emerges in the psychosexual development of the child is the 'Oedipus complex'. This complex can be represented at different

degrees of remove in culturally significant Oedipal *myths*. Neither myth nor complex is universal in the sense of exhibiting an invariant pattern or structure; but they might exhibit 'family resemblances.'

Notes

1. A.K. Ramanujan, 'The Indian Oedipus', in Lowell Edmunds and Alan Dundes (eds), *Oedipus: A Folklore Casebook* (New York: Garland Publishing Company, 1983) pp. 234–61.
2. Ramanujan, 'The Indian Oedipus', p. 237.
3. Ibid., p. 238.
4. See also Sudhir Kakar, *The Inner World: A Psychoanalytic Study of Childhood and Society in India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1981) pp. 104–8.
5. Ramanujan, 'The Indian Oedipus', p. 243.
6. Ibid., pp. 246–8.
7. Claude Lévi-Strauss, 'The Structural Study of Myth', in Claire Jacobson and Brooke Grundfest Schoepf (trans.), *Structural Anthropology* (New York: Basic Books) p. 215.
8. R.P. Goldman, 'Fathers, Sons and Gurus: Oedipal Conflict in the Sanskrit Epics', *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, 6, 1978, pp. 325–92.
9. Ibid., pp. 360–1.
10. Ibid., p. 363.
11. Ibid., p. 333.
12. Ibid., p. 363.
13. Ibid., p. 364.
14. Ibid., p. 329.
15. Ibid., pp. 330–1.
16. Ibid., p. 332.
17. Ibid., p. 350.
18. Talcott Parsons, 'Social Structure and the Development of Personality: Freud's Contribution to the Integration of Psychology and Sociology', *Psychiatry*, 1958, pp. 321–46. See also the collection of his important papers on this subject in *Social Structure and Personality* (New York: Free Press, 1965).
19. Kakar, *The Inner World*, p. 135.
20. Sigmund Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, *Standard Edition*, vol. 19, 1923, pp. 12–59.
21. Ibid., pp. 31–2. My italics.

22. Ibid., p. 33.
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid.
25. Sigmund Freud, 'Some Neurotic Mechanisms in Jealousy, Paranoia and Homosexuality', *Standard Edition*, vol. 28, 1922, pp. 223–32.
26. The best example is the study of Schreber. See 'Psychoanalytic Notes on an Autobiographical Account of a Case of Paranoia', *Standard Edition*, vol. 12, 1911, pp. 3–88. See also 'Little Hans', *Standard Edition*, vol. 10, 1909, p. 20.
27. Sigmund Freud, 'Female Sexuality', *Standard Edition*, vol. 21, 1931, pp. 223–43.
28. Ibid.
29. Ibid., p. 235.
30. Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, p. 32. Freud discusses the parallelism between the male and female Oedipus complex in many other places, for example, in *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, *Standard Edition*, vol. 8, 1921, p. 106.
31. Freud, 'Female Sexuality', p. 225.
32. Ibid.
33. Ibid.
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid., p. 226. In fact Freud was not consistent in regard to the roots of neurosis in the Oedipus complex. See J. Laplanche and J.B. Pontalis, *The Language of Psychoanalysis*, D. Nicholson-Smith (trans.) (New York: Norton, 1973) pp. 284–5.
36. Ibid.
37. Ibid.
38. Ibid., p. 233.

Part Four

Early and Later Theoretical Formations

7

Hindu Personality Formation: Unconscious Processes

G.M. Carstairs

A child's learning begins long before it can talk. Indeed it is likely that the learning which occurs during its first two years to a large extent lays down those patterns of expectation and response by which we recognize an individual's personality. During the earliest years the child's intelligence is gradually developing — prompted, so Piaget maintains, by social stimulation — but its feelings are from the very outset intense, though at first undifferentiated. Later on, the habit of rationalization will intervene to an increasing extent between perception and feeling and between feeling and response: the innocent eye of childhood will be dimmed, and the spontaneity of young children will be succeeded by the deliberation and self-consciousness of their elders.

This intervention of rational categories serves a protective as well as a useful purpose. It is useful because verbal concepts make possible the learning of new techniques of mastery over persons and things; and it is protective because cerebral control damps down, if it does not altogether inhibit, feelings which can be painfully strong. Nevertheless, the life of feeling continues its subterranean existence, finding expression in emotional response to people, to nature, and to works of art, and in phantasies and dreams. In adult life feeling-responses tend to be subordinated to deliberate, rational behaviour; but on closer examination this behaviour is often found to be merely a disguised expression of emotional reactions.

These irrational, emotionally determined quirks of behaviour and response are not wholly arbitrary. They are found to recur in many different contexts; and when studied carefully they reveal a pattern and an interconnectedness in which the connections are not necessarily logical but in many cases symbolical, and only subjectively meaningful. In order to interpret them correctly, intellectual understanding of the facts of an informant's situation is not enough; one has in addition to empathize, to 'feel with' him before one can identify his elusive patterns of emotional response. Once identified, these emotional syndromes can provide the key to the understanding of both individual and group personality.

This is the point at which students of culture and personality part company with those psychologists and anthropologists who refuse on principle to go beyond facts, which can be objectively demonstrated and quantified: and yet the antithesis between these methods is not complete. The employment of aesthetic sensibility in order to recognize emotional sequences in a person's (or a people's) thinking and behaviour does not preclude the subsequent use of systematic observation and measurement in order to verify or modify predictions to which these empathically-identified concepts have given rise.

Since Ruth Benedict's pioneering work there have been several outstanding examples of the interpretation of national character. Among others might be mentioned the studies of the Balinese by Bateson and Mead, of the American Indians by Erik Erikson, of the Americans by Mead and Gorer, of the Japanese by Benedict, of the Germans by Dicks and by Schaffner, of the Russians by Dicks and Gorer, the work of Roheim and Kardiner, and the group of studies reported by Mead and Métraux.[1]

Although diverse in content, these works are united by certain assumptions held in common by their authors: that the key to understanding national character lies in the study of processes in the personality development of individuals; that events which occur in the earliest stages of human psychological maturation have an enduring influence throughout later life; and that dynamic psychology provides the best available theory for the elucidation of personality development. These assumptions are also basic to the interpretations of Hindu personality development advanced in the present paper.

In attempting to understand the outlook of an alien people, an ever more comprehensive knowledge of the *facts* about their language, history, geography, economics, social structure and religion can take us only part of the way. Sooner or later we come up against the realization that these facts mean something different to them and to us. In order fully to understand a people's 'otherness' we must try to grasp the essence of these distortions; and this involves a recognition of subjective emotional factors in their personalities — and in our own.

Each people has a characteristic 'style' of thinking and of personal interaction, and this is not fortuitous: it is due to the continuance, in the unconscious mind of each member of the society, of certain emotionally significant phantasies which were formed in early infant life. Group character can be interpreted and understood only when the underlying phantasies upon which it is based are brought to consciousness. In a personal psychoanalysis the focus is upon the unique idiosyncratic elements in each patient's pattern of phantasies; in the study of national character, on the other hand, it is the communally-shared phantasies which demand attention.

Human phantasy life can be compared to an unfamiliar script which is still in the process of being interpreted. Its cryptograms have been present since the beginnings of history, in the form of myths and legends, dreams, superstitions and fairy tales. These ciphers have always been regarded as significant because they were strangely moving although no one knew why. It was Freud who first succeeded in deciphering them and spelling out what they mean. Using psychoanalytic theory as the key, it is now possible to chart the basic phantasies found in the emotional life of individuals, and of communities.

The process whereby infantile phantasies come to underlie adult personality is closely analogous to the way in which a child learns to talk. A baby's first utterances are formless cries prompted by feelings of hunger and discomfort, and the relief of his discomfort leads him to return to silence, and to sleep. Within a few weeks, however, wakefulness begins to play a larger part in the infant's life. He begins to chuckle, to burble and to crow as well as to cry. At this stage there is a very wide range of meaningless sounds (many of them rather attractive) which he can and does utter; but during his first year he becomes

increasingly interested in using this gift of utterance in order to communicate with those nearest to him, particularly his mother. At first their communication is in 'meaningful sounds' rather than in words, but already at this stage he finds that the great majority of the sounds which he *can* utter are useless as means of communication — because his mother tongue, like every human language, has selected a quite restricted number of these many possible utterances and regards only these as being meaningful. These are described as phonemes, and constitute the basic elements of sound of which the language is composed.

Already in 1911 the linguist and anthropologist Franz Boas had enunciated these principles of phonetic analysis: (1) that the total number of sounds that may be found as one proceeds from language to language is unlimited; but (2) that every single language has a definite and limited group of sounds, none of which is excessively large.[2]

This restriction of the gamut of 'available' utterances gives each language its individual cadence and imposes upon all those whose mother tongue it is, style of articulation which is recognizable even when they speak in another language. It is a matter of everyday experience that one can often identify a Norwegian, a Hungarian, a West African, an Indian or a Scot by the characteristic accent which each one brings to the speaking of English. By means of phonetic analysis one can identify with some precision the repertoire of sounds to which each speaker's utterances are habitually restricted, and can predict the characteristic transpositions which will occur when he talks a language other than his own.

Clearly one begins to acquire one's native phoneme-pattern even before one has learned to talk. At an equally early age, the ground-work is laid for defining the pattern of one's future style of emotional response. As with speech, so with emotional relationship: a child's earliest experiences occur in relation to his mother. In the earliest weeks, before she can be comprehended as a separate being, the infant's phantasies are dominated by what looms largest in his experience, namely his internal feelings of hunger or satiety and the physical presence of his mother's breast and supporting arms which are so closely associated with these alternating states of feeling.

More than any other psychoanalyst, Melanie Klein has succeeded in demonstrating the importance of the child's adaptation to these, its earliest object-relationships, in determining the tenor of its later relationships and its future capacity for constructive activity and self-expression.[3] She has shown that even in early infancy, phantasy begins to operate, not in a formless manner but in rather concrete terms, endowing the first objects which the infant is able to perceive with magical powers to succour or to harm.

In principle there is no limit to the range of possible phantasies (just as there is no limit to the range of possible utterances) but in practice children reiterate a comparatively small number of phantasies over and over again. Klein believes that certain symbols are innate in the child's unconscious mind, just as sucking and grasping reflexes are present from birth, but that the majority of sequences of phantasy are alike because they take cues from similar sequences of events in the give-and-take of the relationship between mothers and young children.

Applying Klein's theory of early infantile phantasy to the study of group character, I would contend that in the first and second years of life children acquire certain *nuclear phantasies* which underlie and determine their future modes of reaction to events and to people encountered in later life. In any social group these nuclear phantasies tend to remain consistent and similar because they are transmitted unconsciously from mother to child in the context of feeling and behaviour characteristic of the nursing relationship: and this is a context which, at least in non-Western communities, is extremely resistant to change.

Just as the phoneme-pattern of its mother tongue imposes on each people, and even on each regional group, a particular accent which will always be distinguishable in its speech, so the sharing of similar nuclear phantasies in infancy will give rise to common characteristics in a people's adult 'style of reaction'. This is the justification for the belief that the key to an understanding of group character lies in elucidating a community's shared infantile phantasies.

The remainder of this chapter is accordingly devoted to a discussion of some of the basic phantasies which appeared to be shared by my informants in Deoli, and of their possible influence upon Hindu personality formation.

A high-caste Hindu presents a seeming triumph of deliberate self-control over spontaneous impulse. This is conspicuously the case with the religious ascetic, who learns to subordinate all sensual promptings to his deliberate aim of cultivating non-attachment; but it is also seen in the decorous, restrained behaviour to which all adults aspire. Behind this façade, however, irrational impulses are at work, betraying themselves indirectly in a number of ways — for example, in a man's attitude towards his wife, and women in general.

Ideally, woman is regarded as a wholly devoted, self-forgetful mother, or as a dutifully subservient wife, who is ready to worship her husband as her lord. In fact, however, women are regarded with an alternation of desire and revulsion. Sexual love is considered the keenest pleasure known to the senses: but it is felt to be destructive to a man's physical and spiritual well-being. Women are powerful, demanding, seductive — and ultimately destructive. On the plane of creative phantasy, everyone worships the Mataji, the Goddess, who is a protective mother to those who prostrate themselves before her in abject supplication, but who is depicted also as a sort of demon, with gnashing teeth, who stands on top of her male adversary, cuts off his head and drinks his blood. This demon-goddess has the same appearance as a witch — and that brings her nearer home, because *any* woman whose demands one has refused is liable to be feared as a witch who may exact terrible reprisals.

In endeavouring to interpret these implicit emotional reactions to women in general, one looks to the child's first relationship with a woman, with his mother: because the feelings associated with that relationship will frame the expectations with which he approaches all subsequent heterosexual relationships. What I found in Deoli was that Hindu children, almost without exception, begin life with an abundantly rewarding experience. During their first year, they are never separated from their mothers for more than a short time, and they are given the breast generously, whenever they feel hungry or upset. An infant's mother is his willing slave, and he becomes something of a tyrant. This pattern of mothering is, if anything, too good. Child analysis in the West suggests that infants may be alarmed by their own seeming omnipotence, fearing that the bullied mother may one day turn and rend them (like the devouring witch) in retaliation for their own

momentarily intense wishes to destroy her by biting and eating her up. In the West a child experiences greater amounts of deprivation, in the cause of 'training', and is able to test out his fits of hostility towards his mother, taking reassurance from the fact that she not only survives them, but still loves him. In the Hindu family, because he experiences so little frustration, the child develops an assurance that support and succour will never be denied him — hence his constant (and even unrealistic) optimism in later life — but his aggressive phantasies remain rudimentary, imperious and unmodified by the experience of minor deprivations — until, at the age of one and a half or two, new experiences occur with bewildering rapidity.

Already, before this, the child will have cause to notice that his mother, though devoted to his service, is unaccountably inconstant in the warmth of her contact with him. At times she caresses him affectionately while at other times owing to the presence of her parents-in-law she becomes aloof and seemingly indifferent to him. Sometimes also he will have known what it is to have this monopoly of his mother usurped by his father, when the latter begins to claim his wife again.

Hitherto he has always slept beside his mother but now his father literally takes his place. At this time, too, the child is weaned. He has for many months been given increasing amounts of adult food and drink, so that the weaning is not a physiological hardship; but it represents a withdrawal and a reversal of his mother's previous unquestioning devotion to his needs. Coming at this point it adds to the feeling of rejection by his loved and dominated mother. When his mother resumes her menstrual functions and becomes periodically 'unclean' this impurity is not believed to endanger small children; but as the child grows older he has to learn to avoid his mother at such times as one who is mysteriously dangerous, like the blood-stained demon-goddess Durga (whose name means 'Unapproachable'). Other sorts of learning also crowd in upon the small boy, because now that he is beginning to be able to speak and to 'understand' he ceases to be the inarticulate tyrant of the household and instead becomes the recipient of numerous instructions and mock threats.

I suggest that this relatively late reversal of a previously dominating (although emotionally inconsistent) relationship with his mother has a profound effect upon the child's later development.

The underlying mistrust which seems to cloud so many of my informants' adult personal relationships may well be derived from the phantasy of a fickle mother who mysteriously withholds her caresses and attentions from time to time; but at weaning the child's emotional insecurity is suddenly intensified. Earlier experience has created in his phantasy a bias in favour of the feeling that things will come right in the end (the breast will not long be withheld) but now the two most certain-seeming facts of life — the mother's constant support and the child's own omnipotence — suddenly prove unreliable. It is as if he were accustomed again and again to climb a certain step and then suddenly found the step no longer there. His confidence is shattered and from now on he mistrusts everything that pretends to constancy — his own and others' personalities, and even objects in the material world. To such a feeling the concept of all-pervading Maya seems appropriate, if not inevitable.

In contrast with the Western child whose familiarity with intermittent experiences of frustration and delayed satisfaction has enabled him to indulge his aggressive phantasies in moderation, only to be reassured by his mother's renewed affectionate attentions, this desertion on the part of his mother seems a final one. In his phantasy she becomes someone terrible, revengeful, bloodthirsty and *demanding* in the same limitless way as the formerly imperious child. As the Goddess, she is seen as a horrific figure, decapitating men and drinking their blood. In order to appease her fury she must be placated with offerings, but what is more important, she must be appealed to in an attitude of complete submission. She becomes kind and rewarding, a mother again and no longer a demon, only when one has surrendered one's manhood and become a helpless infant once again. Significantly, as will be shown below, the offering proper to the Mataji consists of the symbolic castration of a male animal, whose blood she drinks. This may be the source of the feeling that sexual intercourse represents a victory for the woman, who must be served when she demands it, and a castrating of the man — because with every issue of semen he loses virtue and manly strength at the same time.

The most widely known of all forms of the Goddess is that which depicts her as Kali the black she-demon, naked, four-armed, wearing a garland of the heads of giants, dancing on the

breast of her prostrate consort, Mahakala, who is Lord Shiva. In this context, the child's father is seen as a fellow-victim of this mother-figure who is at once an object of adoration and of fear.

Hitherto his father has been a relatively unimportant figure in his life — in most families, as we have seen, fathers refrain from 'making much of' their infants — but now he becomes intensely significant, sometimes as a fellow-victim, sometimes as the towering rival whose intervention has destroyed his former blissful state. From this time on his father's voice will be associated with commands which must be obeyed. The pain of defeat by the father in the oedipal situation is greatly intensified by the frequency with which the child is an involuntary witness of parental intercourse. It is not lightened, as in the West, by the creation of a warm relationship between father and son. This has been prevented by the taboo upon the father's giving expression to affectionate feelings for his child. Instead, it appears to the boy that he has no choice other than that of unconditional surrender before this strong intruding stranger, his father. He must not only submit before this rival, but must deny any wish to compete with him. This is clearly reflected in the Hindu's later attitude towards his fellow men. To his father, and to figures of authority in general he owes unquestioning obedience. He is obliged in their presence to suppress all indications that he may lead an adult sexual life, and by extension he has to stifle every manifestation of his spontaneity and emotional responsiveness. In effect all those who occupy the status of sons or younger brothers are required to enact a symbolic self-castration, denying themselves the right to lead an emotional or sexual life of their own so long as the father-figures still live and dominate them. This is implicit in the Hindus' willing subservience to autocratic Rajahs, to the rich, and to important officials. *'Rais hain'*, they say: ('They are the lordly ones'), and they submit.

On the other hand he expects a similar unquestioning subservience from all who are below him in rank and authority. This self-castration is the fundamental Hindu attitude towards the father, though it is not, as I shall indicate below, the only one.

There is a corollary to this catastrophic reversal of the infant's early blissful situation. In order to recapture it in phantasy he must become a helpless child again as he does when prostrating himself before the Mother-Goddess; and this is also the essence

of a Hindu's attitude towards his father and his Guru, and in his religious worship. In each of these situations he stresses on the one hand his utter helplessness, his unlimited appeal, and on the other his ruthless suppression of his own sexuality, and with it all his sensual gratifications. When confronted with this complete surrender, the deity, the father and the Guru are compelled to offer help; the tyranny of early childhood reasserts itself. This is seen also in the universal compulsion, in Hindu society, to give alms when they are begged. People give to beggars not because they enjoy giving (though for some it can be a pleasure as well as a duty) but because they feel intensely uncomfortable and guilty if they fail to do so; and this occurs not only in public, when they might be thought to be coerced by social pressure (as we feel obliged to conform with our neighbours on flag days) but also in their private thoughts.

Infants do not have a monopoly of infantile phantasy, which reveals itself in adults in similar irrational feelings. Fathers can be unwittingly jealous of their small sons, as well as sons of their fathers. It may well be the father's guilt at his suppressed hostility to his infant rival which obliges him to overcompensate for this, in accepting his obligation to support his son, provided the latter has demonstrated his complete submission.

If the supplicant's self-punitive attitude can be maintained with great intensity, as in the accounts of holy men who have practised severe austerities, it is believed that a magical result is ultimately obtained. The ascetic is rewarded in three ways — with omnipotence in face of which even the Gods, the ultimate father-figures, are powerless; with a sense of bliss, which is like sexual satisfaction, but even more intense; and finally with release from separate self-hood, back into the nothingness of union with the creator-spirit of the universe. These rewards can be interpreted respectively as the regaining of infantile omnipotence, and so triumphing over the authority of one's father; as resuming possession of one's mother with the intense gratification of infantile sexuality; and as the return to the dark mindless 'togetherness' of prenatal existence. In *Samadhi*, the saint has by the progressive annihilation of all external and internal distracting stimuli, achieved the feat of voluntary regression to the prenatal state before his first encounter with the outside world. He is lowered into a pit, the womb of earth, and once enclosed there he lives

for ever unchanging in a timeless bliss of union with his creator: a triumph of phantasy over the reality-scene.

I have already suggested that it is in the seeming 'betrayal' by a child's mother that we must seek the explanation of the lack of empathy, and the prevailing uncertainty of mind which so forcibly impressed me in Deoli; but it is in his accommodation to the stress of intense oedipal rivalry with his father, that the pattern of his adult paranoid trends can be discerned. According to Freudian theory, paranoid reactions can be traced to one type of outcome of the Oedipus situation, namely that in which the boy assumes a passive role and in phantasy has a homosexual love-relationship with his father. But while he longs to be possessed in this way, the child also fears and repudiates his desire; hence the transition from 'I love him', through 'I hate him', to 'He hates me', on which delusions of persecution are based.

Already in my informants' phantasies the father has been seen as a fellow-victim of the witch-goddess-mother; but there is also a powerfully-repressed homosexual fixation on the father. This is shown not only in the ever-recurring paranoid reactions, but also, in indirect and sublimated form, in a man's feelings toward his Guru — the one context in which a warm affectionate relationship (although a passive and dependent one) is given free expression. Since this occurs at the stage of development when anal functions are the focus of keenest emotional interest, the conflict is usually expressed in anal terms. In analysis, the buttocks and other parts of the body are found to be implied when psychotic patients give free associations to their delusions about sinister machines. The theme of supernatural influence (expressed in the West as 'scientific rays', in India as death-dealing magic, and in both cultures as mysterious powers of thought-control) is similarly found to derive from infantile phantasies about the faeces, as dark autonomous goblin-like agencies, issuing from the self.

This brings to mind the remarkable place occupied by faeces in the implicit phantasy life of these Hindus. Two forms of contamination which coalesce were constantly being described: that due to faeces, and that due to association with persons of lower caste and particularly to eating with them. Thus, the remains of a partly-eaten dish or any food which has once been brought into contact with the lips, becomes *jutha* and it is abhorrent, almost unthinkable, for anyone else to eat this, though

such food may be given to the untouchable sweeper-caste. Emotionally, *jutha* is treated with the same abhorrence as is human excrement. It was noticeable that Brahmins might be employed as cooks (and often were called in to cook, when other Brahmins were to be the guests) but the collecting and disposal of used utensils was left to menials of low caste, or to the women of the house. Exceptions to this abhorrence of *jutha* occur within the family and in a sacred context. A father often summons his children to partake of food which he left over. This is a privilege; and it is also a privilege to be allowed to eat *prashad*, the offering of food which a God has 'tasted'. Symbolically, these left-overs represent the faeces of the father and the God: the act of grateful acceptance represents a submission to their authority, and is the model of the only 'good' relationship with the father. In contrast, the phantasy of a good mother goes back to the early experience of generous suckling; at that infantile level, everything issuing from the mother is felt to be nourishing and beneficent. This attitude is reflected in beliefs about the sacred cow, paradigm of motherhood, whose dung and urine are felt to have healing properties, and whose 'five products' are swallowed in the course of ceremonies of purification.

An interesting aspect of the deification of the cow (which represents the wholly gratifying mother of one's earliest recollection) is the way in which the role of her consort, the bull, is minimized. He is a benevolent nonentity, as is the child's father during his first year of life; and yet as Nandi, the divine bull, this mild and passive figure is always associated with Lord Shiva, the essence of maleness. Beside every phallic lingam, representing the Great God, is portrayed a sitting bull. Philosophically, Shiva stands for both the generative power and the destruction of the universe, but in the context of village experience he represents on the one hand, the ideal of *tapassya* (the self-castration of extreme asceticism with the aim of obliterating all sensuality) and on the other, as consort of the demon-goddess, he is sometimes her victim, at others himself a still fiercer and more terrible destroyer.

Nandi and Shiva thus illustrate three aspects of the father-figure. Another aspect no less universally encountered, is that presented by the god Vishnu, who appears in diverse forms, but always as a benign, gentle figure, succouring and sustaining, who

inspires love. In Vishnu-worship, sexuality is not abhorred, but rather idealized. As Krishna, he is the great lover; but he is portrayed as an effeminate, seductive and yet divinely powerful youth. His devotees seem at times to identify with him as he makes his amorous conquests, at other times to identify themselves with the *gopis* (the girl cowherds) who are overcome with pleasurable anticipation at his approach. This particular father-figure can be recognized as revealing a thinly-veiled longing for him as a homosexual lover. The persistence of repressed homosexual urges is suggested both by their frank display in the stereotyped deviant behaviour of *hijras* and in the violent feelings of disgust which they arouse. When the same theme is presented in slightly disguised and sublimated form, it is openly enjoyed. It was noticeable that when the popular rustic opera Ram Lila was performed in Deoli, the centre of interest was the elegant young man who played the part of the heroine Sita. Everyone spoke with admiration of his good looks, and he received many encores.

Although they showed marked paranoid tendencies, my informants were far from obsessional: and this at first was puzzling. Verbally, they seemed intensely scrupulous about cleanliness and about attention to details of ritual performance; and yet in practice they were tolerant of seemingly filthy surroundings, and in practice their rituals corresponded only very approximately to the precise formulation with which they were described. Again, their indifference to unpunctuality, their easy acceptance of abrupt changes of plan and their seeming inability to carry through long-term undertakings to their conclusion — these were all unobsessional characteristics.[5]

The confusion in interpretation arose from their verbal insistence upon faecal cleanliness. In the West, over-strict toilet training is believed by psychoanalysts to result in accentuation of those obsessional traits of punctuality, neatness and conscientiousness which comprise the 'anal character', and which are favoured in our culture. In contrast to the Hindu pattern, Western obsessionals are seriously distressed if they are not able to carry out their routines with precision; and they cannot discuss anal topics without embarrassment. That Hindus are unobsessional and yet preoccupied with this topic of faecal contamination is attributable to the fact that in infancy their training in cleanliness is gentle,

leisurely and unemphasized: it is only after the age of two, when verbal instruction comes into play and when the oedipal conflict is at its height, that their attention is focused upon this function. From this time onwards faecal contamination becomes intimately tied up with submission to paternal authority, with religious worship, and with questions of relative caste status. It is implicit in the emphasis upon eating only with the right hand; upon eating only with caste fellows; and upon regarding other persons' leavings as if they were excrement. To be willing to sit and eat together constitutes a powerful bond; but to eat together out of one dish represents a bond of the closest intimacy, for it means at the same time 'we are fed by one mother', and 'we accept the *jutha* (which is equivalent to the faeces) of one father'.

This act of eating together is emotionally so important that in social life it outweighs most other considerations. Thus, a sannyasi may be regarded as a holy, god-like man: and yet his former caste-fellows will not eat with him because he no longer observes their taboos against commensality. In describing the excesses of the *lajadharm*, Hari Lal expressed greater horror of the fact that members of all castes supped from one dish, than he did of their sexual excesses. On the other hand, careful observance of food taboos and avoidance of association with low-caste persons left a man not only in a pure state, but fortified against sensual temptation.

The pious Hindu's repugnance for alcohol is perfectly understandable, because of its notorious disinhibitory properties. Alcoholic intoxication militates against that subjection of the self which is seen to be the principal emphasis of the religious life, just as it is the accepted way of dealing with a surcharged oedipal situation. If one looks into the associations linked with wine, its use is seen to be permissible to Rajputs in order to nerve them for their aggressive role. It is also associated with the two terrible aspects of the phantasied parent-figures, the Mataji and Bhairav, who exemplify the explosive discharge of all the violent passions which a man normally keeps rigorously under control; but never with Shiva the ascetic, or Vishnu the mild sustaining ally of mankind. It is those castes, the Brahmins and the Banias, who are denied any approved aggressive outlet (such as Rajputs enjoy in hunting, concubinage and war) who condemn alcohol with especial emotional vehemence, because it presents a threat to

their customary defences against their own severely repressed emotions: a threat, and perhaps also a temptation which they must at once repudiate.

The same holds true of eating meat, but with still greater force: and even Rajputs seem to feel uneasy about their indulgence in this privilege. Many who were not over-scrupulous in other respects (such as Hira Singh, Nathu Singh, Partab Singh) took pains to assure me that they were practically vegetarians.

Here again the associations with meat-eating are interesting. The one occasion of the year when meat is plentiful is at Navratri, when a series of blood sacrifices is made to the Mataji. The most usual form of sacrifice is a goat (and it must be a he-goat) which is led before the shrine and then decapitated with one blow of a sword. In Deoli, this was the only form of meat, and whether the goat were a formal offering, or simply killed by the Khatik, it would still have to be a male, and to be killed in this way.

The identification of the male goat with the male victims of the Goddess is made explicit by the *bhopa*'s act of drinking the goat warm blood, mixed with alcohol, while he is possessed by the spirit of the Mataji. The goat is sacrificed to appease her devouring rage, and then her worshippers unite in eating its meat. This act, which is felt by Brahmins and Banias to be one of grave impiety, which even Rajputs feel to be incompatible with the enlightened religious life, means symbolically that the child feasts with his demon-mother upon his father's blood. To take meat means to eat the father's penis and so acquire his virility. This makes one strong, because meat is a builder of semen, but it puts one in peril of a similar castrating attack, either from the Goddess or from her still more fearsome consort, Bhairavji, and it estranges one from the path of submission and denial of one's sexuality, which is felt to be the only way to ultimate reconciliation with one's mother and father-figures. The orthodox Hindu ban on eating meat, and the stress on *ahimsa* (not taking life) can thus be interpreted as the conscious reaction-formations against repressed oedipal feelings of hostility against the father, feelings which are never allowed direct expression.

There are, of course, some foods which are associated not with threatening, but with gratifying phantasies. The preoccupation with loss of semen, which is a very common source of neurotic anxiety among Hindu men, can be palliated by eating

certain exceptionally good, health-giving foods, namely wheat flour, rice, milk and butter, honey and white sugar. These substances have two valuable attributes: they are 'cool' foods, that is to say they give nourishment without inflaming the passions, and they have the property of building pure, unspoiled semen. In fact *white sugar* (as distinct from the dark, unpurified molasses of everyday use) is used as a synonym for semen; but the constant association of all these foods with this same theme indicates that they are all, in varying degrees, equated in phantasy with rich, desirable semen.

In two social contexts this phantasy is given clear expression. At the great temple of Shiva, only a few miles from Deoli, the bi-annual festivals of that god are the occasion for libations of milk, curds, melted butter, honey and white sugar (in this order). These offerings are poured on to the upright phallic *lingam* which represents the god's creative powers, thus bringing semen and semen-foods into conjunction.

At every Hindu wedding, there is expected to be a prodigal dispensation of these exalted foods. During the feasting which attends these ceremonies, particular emphasis is placed upon the amount of *ghi* (clarified butter) which is offered to the male guests. Young men vie with each other in the amount they can consume. It is regarded as a mark of virility to be able to swallow two pounds or more at one sitting; and the boasting and teasing which attends these feasts make it clear that here *ghi* is being equated with semen.

All these cherished semen-equivalents have in common the properties of being fluid (even sugar can be poured) opaque and *white*. Here is the opposite pole of that strong, unreasoning prejudice against darkness which is evident in many contexts of Hindu life (from the desire to marry a light-complexioned spouse, to the use of black flags and garments as a symbol of deprecation). Earlier, it was suggested that the emotional bias against dark things is due to the strong investment of feelings concerning the threat of faecal contamination. In contrast, pure uncontaminated semen is highly esteemed, and the favourable emotional attitudes to which it gives rise are carried over to the qualities of fairness, sweetness and freedom from adulteration — qualities which are admired in one's fellow-men as well as in one's diet.

It is claimed by psychoanalysis that one indication of a person's

having attained emotional maturity is his ability to have a mutually rewarding experience of intercourse with a love partner of the opposite sex. Freud himself once defined a normal man as one who was able 'to work and to love'; and D.H. Lawrence considered the full life to be one in which a man alternated between 'daytime purposive activity' and a deep emotional union with a sex partner. These are norms which not only the emotionally sick but many ordinary Westerners fail to achieve: and they illustrate very clearly the occidental cultural bias in favour of individual achievement and self-realization.

In the Hindu world, sexuality is considered an impediment to the progress towards emotional maturity, which comes only with the final triumph of asceticism. Sexuality remains always something detrimental, dangerous, seductive. A young man's sex life is restrained by many factors, by his wife's being not of his own choice, by his living in his parents' house, and his having to deny his sexual life while in their presence, by his phantasies concerning women, of whom the demon-Goddess is the paradigm, and not least by his phantasy of his father as a gigantic rival threatening instant destruction if he dares to reassert his infantile claims upon his mother. These are the circumstances in which one would expect to encounter either homosexuality or impotence. The evidence for the existence of strong repressed homosexual urges has already been discussed. The actual practice of homosexuality certainly occurred: my informants were prone to accuse each other of it, though it was not a thing which they would describe in their own experience, except as a childhood phase. Impotence was a very common occurrence, and preoccupation with fears of impotence or of loss of virility (a form of castration-fear) seemed to be present in the majority of men.

Another pattern of sexual response was found repeatedly: This was a sharp distinction between their potency in relations with prostitutes or in promiscuous affairs with girls of an inferior caste, and with their wives. In the former instances, it was the men who took the initiative, and they described their (necessarily secret, but not strongly disapproved) adventures with pleasure; but in their own homes it was different. There, it was the wives whose appetites must be satisfied: and there the anxieties over failing strength and potency were most intense. This was clearly because married life, conducted under one's father's roof, within the

extended family, excited all the terrors of childish oedipal phantasy, whereas the despised casual sex partner could be more easily dissociated from this scene except where she was found to be older than the man — in which case anxiety returned. Significantly, almost every one of my informants told me that it was advisable to have sex relations only with women younger than oneself: to sleep with a woman several years older would destroy a man's strength in a short space of time. The older woman is feared because she conjures up the repressed oedipal craving for possession of the mother, and so intensifies the castration anxieties which dog all sexual functions.

Earlier in this chapter it was suggested that it was the abrupt change from an unfrustrated infancy to the subsequent 'desertion' by his mother which not only created the Hindu child's phantasy-picture of her, and her later substitutes, as witch-like figures, but also shattered his early scheme of object-relationships, so that he found it difficult in later life to trust or even to empathize with other persons. In one sense, everyone goes through life trying to find again the good relation he once had with his idealized parents as a small child. The Hindu solution to this quest is not through personal relationships, but in an acceptance of formal mutual obligations to bridge the gap. It would be an act of blindness indeed to suggest that because relations between a Hindu son and his parents, between a man and his wife, lack that warmth and spontaneity which is expected in Western society, they are necessarily inferior. Each patterning of human behaviour has its positive, as well as its limiting aspects. Psychoanalysis is better equipped to demonstrate the latter than the former; but as an ordinary responsive observer one must pay a tribute to the serenity and calm which prevail in a well-adjusted Hindu family. It is perhaps a precarious calm, based on the suppressing rather than on the resolving of underlying tensions, but still it reflects a gracious and civilized way of life.

The characteristically Hindu attitudes which have been discussed in this chapter, attitudes concerning women, sensuality, authority, power, asceticism and non-violence, the Hindu view of the material world, and of their fellow-men and the ultimate values of the Hindu religious outlook — all these things become more readily intelligible when one elucidates the nuclear phantasies which give rise to them. In the present writer's opinion genuine

inter-group and inter-racial understanding will only become possible to the degree that each group's covert pattern of irrational complexes is made the object of study, as well as their history and all the overt aspects of their social life.

Notes

1. See the Bibliography for the following: Benedict (1934); Bateson and Mead (1942); Erikson (1950); Mead (1942); Gorer (1948); Benedict (1946); Dicks (1950); Schaffner (1948); Dicks (1952); Gorer and Rickman (1949); Roheim (1932, 1934); Kardiner (1939, 1945); Mead and Métraux (1953).
2. Boas, F. (1911), pp. 15–16.
3. Klein, M. (1927, 1952, 1955).
4. Fenichel (1945), pp. 427 ff.
5. It might be pointed out that unpunctuality was only natural in a community where clocks and watches were unknown. What was striking, however, was the frequent reference to precise times (e.g. of birth, death, marriage) coupled with an indifference to punctuality in practice.

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8

Psychoanalytic Approaches to Hindu Child Rearing: A Critique

Stanley N. Kurtz

Here I begin a reshaping of psychoanalysis designed to preserve psychoanalytic insight into links between images human and divine, yet also intended to honour the particularity of the Hindu situation. In return for the reader's patient attention to this reworking process, I shall offer a way of looking at things that plausibly reveals the meaning of both Santoshi Ma and the larger Goddess of which she is a version.

Given what we know so far about divine mothers, it is clear that a psychoanalytic study of human mothers must take seriously the ultimate oneness of seemingly independent beings in the Hindu universe. Thus, for example, where traditional psychoanalysis focuses on a child and its mother, we must learn to understand children who live amidst the complex but unified array of caretakers in the Hindu joint family. As currently constituted, however, psychoanalysis is ill suited to such an approach, its intellectual framework having been shaped by our Western individualism. Nonetheless, extant psychoanalytic studies of Hindu child rearing establish a vital starting point for our work.

Recent years have witnessed a resurgence of interest in the psychoanalytic study of Hindu childhood. G. Morris Carstairs' classic early work (1967) has been carried forward in a new form by Sudhir Kakar (1978). More recently, Alan Roland has compared Hindu and Japanese psychology (1988) in a study that builds on and transforms work by Carstairs and Kakar. Increasingly, these psychoanalytic studies influence scholarly treatments

of Hindu religion and society. Works by O'Flaherty (1980), Courtright (1985), and Mandelbaum (1988), for example, make considerable use of the psychoanalytic literature on Hindu childhood. Indeed, broader theoretical and comparative studies of culture and personality are beginning to attend to the literature on Hindu development (Obeyesekere 1981, 1984, 1990; Spiro 1982). Hindu society now stands second to none as a generative locus of scholarship in the field of psychological anthropology.

Yet response to the psychoanalysis of early Hindu life remains mixed (Pocock 1961; Kondos 1986). Psychoanalytic studies, however careful to mark the particularities of the Hindu case, are often dismissed as misguided attempts to fit Hindu culture into an alien mould. Critics of the analysts, however, generally limit themselves to a cursory tour of dangers and distortions in the current approach. To date, there are no systematic, alternative theories of Hindu child psychology. Nor is there even a compendium of data on Hindu child rearing practices from which current or new psychological theories could be fashioned or judged.

This chapter attempts to lay the foundation for a new approach to Hindu child psychology through a critique of the psychoanalysts based on ethnography. Studies by Carstairs, Kakar, and Roland, I argue, are based on a flawed account of Hindu childhood, an account neither modified nor examined since it was first set forth by Carstairs. Attention to anthropological reports of Hindu child rearing reveals defects in the psychoanalytic account and suggests an alternative theoretical construction. Elsewhere, I offer the fundamentals of a new Hindu developmental psychology. Here, I simply suggest the outlines of this approach so as to provide a context for the critique of Carstairs, Kakar, and Roland that follows.

The neglected player in psychoanalytic treatments of Hindu child rearing is the group. Traditionally, psychoanalytic studies focus only on the interaction between the Hindu child and mother although after age five, the father's influence is granted importance. Analysts give caretakers outside the nuclear family (e.g., the mother's mother-in-law and sister-in-law in the joint family) merely passing attention. When acknowledged by analysts (and this is seldom), members of the broader family group are seen as pale copies of the mother or the father, functioning merely to reinforce, diffuse, or disrupt the care offered by the central figures.

I see the group as a primary player in the psychological growth of the Hindu child. No mere copies of parents, group members, as a group, counter the influence of mother and father, drawing the child out of a baby's loves, fears, and hatreds and immersing the growing child in the group itself. Hindu mothers and fathers, moreover, gently push the child out of the parental orbit into that of the group.

The traditional psychoanalytic focus on relations among individual actors in the nuclear family yields a different view. Analysts give us a Hindu child locked in the mother's embrace. In this traditional account, the mother's indulgent presence surrounds the child until around the age of five while the father's discipline intervenes traumatically. This juxtaposition of prolonged indulgence and sudden frustration is said to mark the Hindu adult with a hidden yearning for the idyllic past — a time when child and mother were one. In this psychoanalytic view, the Hindu orientation to the group is not the successful outcome of a characteristically Hindu manner of distancing from the mother but a regressive search for the mother, a quest for a union now lost.

This chapter dissects the evidence on which this viewpoint is based and introduces additional evidence not properly taken into account by psychoanalytic observers. I argue that psychoanalysts have moved too quickly from evidence of physical closeness between the Hindu mother and her child to assumptions about the intimacy of this pair. In fact, the Hindu mother is careful not to load her physical care with the kind of attention or 'mirroring' it would carry in the West. I argue that the Hindu mother's careful mixture of care and restraint acts in a culturally distinctive manner to push the child outward, away from her and toward the group, even as it reassures the child of her caring presence. Psychoanalysts rarely catch this mixture of contact and restraint, seeing instead unmitigated closeness between mother and child. Even glimpsing the mother's restraint, however, analysts take it as yet more evidence of her disturbed relation to the child. This is the viewpoint I wish to rework. Again, however, my purpose in this chapter is not to spin out a group-oriented view of Hindu child psychology but to prepare the ground for such work by a careful critique here of Carstairs, Kakar, and Roland. This approach entails no outright rejection of psychoanalysis but rather a radical attempt to adapt it to the conditions of Hindu society.

G. Morris Carstairs' work is not only the earliest important psychoanalytic treatment of Hindu childhood, it is virtually alone in being grounded on an author's personal field observations. Indeed, Carstairs' account of Hindu child rearing remains the foundation for nearly all later psychoanalytic work.[1] Understanding Carstairs' limitations thus provides the basis for a critique of Kakar and Roland.

Carstairs emphasizes the physical closeness between the Hindu mother and her child (1967: 63–76, 157). In the first two years, child and mother are seldom apart. Commonly, the baby is seen astride the mother's hip. The mother holds her child this way even as she does her chores. Past age two, when the child is somewhat less often by the mother's side, it is common to see a relative, perhaps an older sister, holding the child astride her hip. The child sleeps with the mother, and the breast is kept accessible. No baby is allowed to cry for long since the breast is offered on demand. Citing a Hindu proverb, Carstairs compares the child to the king. What the baby wants it gets. Its needs are indulged. Children, for example, are rarely scolded for soiling in the home. Indeed, informants stress that mothers uncomplainingly clean up a mess. Carstairs says suckling is moderately prolonged, weaning taking place between the age of two and two-and-a-half years. Weaning, Carstairs tells us, is difficult, provoking many days of crying and anger. This is because the Hindu child has never been accustomed to frustration prior to weaning.

In Carstairs' account, one of the few frustrations in early Hindu childhood comes in the presence of the father's mother — the mother's mother-in-law (1967: 66, 68, 71, 157). Carstairs' discussion of the mother-in-law's role illustrates the treatment of third-party caretakers in the traditional psychoanalytic model. In Hindu custom, if there is no cry for the breast, a mother ought not to pay attention to her child in her mother-in-law's presence. Often, if the mother-in-law is in attendance, the child will be given over to her by the mother. Thus, says Carstairs, the reliability of a mother's care is compromised by her mother-in-law's presence.

Here, then, is an example of psychoanalytic individualism. Analysis centres on the intimate bond between two individuals — mother and child. Other family members are granted importance only in so far as they interfere with or support this primary relationship. Elsewhere, Carstairs is more sanguine about the

effects of group caretaking on the Hindu child (1967: 75). He says the care of other family members for the growing child actually reinforces, by contrast, the importance of the uniquely gratifying relation to the mother. In other words, less satisfying care by substitute mothers deepens the attachment to the more giving natural mother. However, from this perspective, too, the group is important only in so far as it affects relations between the primary individuals.

Carstairs' account of Hindu childhood takes an ominous turn when the father enters the picture (1967: 67–70, 75, 76, 147, 159–67). This does not occur for some time, however, as the child remains close to the mother even after weaning. A Hindu boy[2] does not enter the world of men to any considerable extent until the age of five, and if no younger siblings arrive, he may periodically take the breast up to or even beyond this age. Around age five, however, the Hindu boy is thrust into the orbit of his father and suddenly expected to grow up. Now he must help at home, obeying the rules of caste and kinship. Now he must abandon the mother's embrace. Worse, his father remains a cool and distant authority figure. Again, this is particularly so in joint families, where the grandfather's presence obliges the father to maintain a respectful distance from his child. For Carstairs, movement into the orbit of the father represents a 'catastrophic reversal of the infant's early blissful situation' (1967: 160). Moreover, for Carstairs, the Hindu mother's early care of her baby is 'too good' (1967: 157). Carstairs maintains, therefore, that this contrast between excessive early indulgence and dangerously harsh later frustration yields a child prone to regress to early infantile pleasures — a child filled with unresolved fear and anger toward unreliable, disappointing parents (1967: 157–69). What Hindu child care lacks, Carstairs tells us, is the gradual training in frustration tolerance that enables a healthy Western child to cope with the demands of maturity (1967: 157). In Carstairs' account, then, typical Hindu child rearing emerges as significantly more pathogenic than the child rearing commonly found in the West (1967: 158–9).

While the negative implications of this analysis are clear enough, Carstairs is not entirely comfortable with the sense of Hindu pathology that emerges from his work. Toward the conclusion of his analysis, he notes the dangers of taking too dark a view of

Hindu life. Carstairs lauds the serenity and calm of the well-adjusted Hindu family. Yet, while bowing to what he calls 'a gracious and civilized way of life', Carstairs owns that the calm of Hindu family life is 'perhaps a precarious calm, based on the suppressing rather than on the resolving of underlying tensions' (1967: 168–9). In the end, then, Carstairs is forced to affirm the pejorative implications of his analysis.

Sudhir Kakar, an Indian psychoanalyst writing some twenty years after Carstairs, works to moderate the harsher implications of Carstairs' approach. The difficulty with Kakar's analysis is that he tries to moderate Carstairs' negative evaluation of Hindu child rearing without significantly modifying either Carstairs' ethnographic account or his theoretical approach. Kakar relies only on a few observational sources for his factual description of Hindu child rearing, and clearly Carstairs' is foremost among these (Kakar 1978: 196–7). Most significantly, Kakar makes virtually no use of the most detailed anthropological account of Hindu child rearing to date — Leigh Minturn's study of child rearing among a village Rajput caste (Minturn 1966). As we shall see, Minturn's account calls some of Carstairs' most important conclusions into question.

Like Carstairs, Kakar stresses the Hindu child's prolonged physical contact with the mother, breast-feeding on demand, and the traumatic shift to the demanding orbit of the father at around age five — a period Kakar calls the 'second birth' (1978: 79–103, 126–33). In various ways, however, Kakar works to mitigate the negative implications of Carstairs' analysis (1978: 14–36, 85–6). For example, Kakar points out that Hindus value group solidarity over individual independence. Thus, while acknowledging that the child's prolonged closeness to the mother leaves him unprepared for independent activity and fearful of isolation, Kakar maintains that our negative evaluation of these characteristics is a cultural artifact. While Hindu parents do not prepare their child for independence, this, Kakar argues, is entirely consonant with the dominant Hindu cultural values.

Kakar's emphasis on cultural reinforcement of psychological traits is problematic. A traditional psychoanalyst would ask about the source of this cultural support. Indeed, for the most part, Kakar himself, like other psychoanalytic observers of culture, claims to ground cultural tendencies in psychology. Yet if Hindu

culture reinforces what psychoanalysts call pathology, must not this cultural tendency itself be a product of, and evidence for, the pathology in question? Even if we argue that social structure and child rearing practices reinforce each other in a kind of circle of causation, mere compatibility between these causal forces does not settle questions of pathology. Psychoanalysis' negative evaluation of Hindu child rearing practices is built deeply into its theory. Unless Kakar modifies this theory, at least in its application to Hindu India, we can expect that its negative evaluation of 'dependent' or group-oriented behaviour will emerge.

This is what happens in the body of Kakar's analysis. Kakar's attempt to explain away the negative psychoanalytic evaluation of Hindu character is undermined by the inner logic of the theory upon which he grounds his work. For example, Kakar denies that Hindu fears of independence or isolation represent regression or fixation at the oral-narcissistic stage of development (1978: 28, 130). Further, Kakar rejects entirely the Freudian notion that an excess of early satisfaction 'spoils' a child, leaving him unable to handle diminutions of pleasure (1978: 87–8). Yet Kakar surreptitiously restores each of these notions in his discussion of the Hindu second birth — the period after age five when the mother's indulgence ends and demands are placed upon the boy by the father (1978: 126–33). Kakar's entire analysis turns on the way this so-called crackdown phase precipitates a 'narcissistic injury of the first magnitude' in the Hindu child. According to Kakar:

> The abrupt severance of the four-or-five-year-old boy from the intimate company of a single paramount 'other' and the radical disruption this entails partly explain the narcissistic vulnerability of the male psyche in India. . . . In spite of the emotional 'riches' that a long and intense loving reciprocity with the mother may store up in the individual's inner world, this same intense exclusivity tends to hinder the growth of the son's autonomy, thereby leaving the psychic structure relatively undifferentiated, the boundaries of the self vague, and the inner convictions — 'I am perfect' and 'You are perfect but I am part of you' — more or less uncompromised in their primitive emotional originality (Kakar 1978: 130).

Kakar lays exclusive responsibility for the narcissistic injury discussed above upon the second birth. Nonetheless, the negative consequences of an 'abrupt severance of the four- or five-year-old boy from the intimate company of a single paramount "other"'

must be a product not only of the later separation but also of the earlier prolonged and near-exclusive attachment described. The very existence of an 'abrupt severance' depends upon the prior period of unmodified closeness. Thus, despite explicit denials, Kakar has adopted Carstairs' theory of early overindulgence complicated by later traumatic disappointment. The outcome, moreover, seems clearly to be narcissistic fixation. In the following passage, Kakar (ibid.: 130) struggles with this implication of his analysis:

> I would contend that among Indian men the process of integrating these archaic narcissistic configurations developmentally is rarely accomplished in the sense that it is among men in the West. This does not mean that Indians are narcissistic while westerners are not. Adapting one of Freud's metaphors, we might say that westerners have fewer 'troops of occupation' remaining at the home base of archaic narcissism, the bulk of the army having marched on — although under great stress they too may retreat. In contrast, Indians tend to maintain more troops at the narcissistic position, with the advance platoons poised to join them whenever threatened or provoked.

While Kakar denies narcissistic fixation in the Hindu male, the metaphor he employs is precisely Freud's way of describing the phenomena of fixation and regression (Freud 1966: 341). The above passage appears to be a denial, but in fact it is an explicit affirmation in Freudian terms that pathology among Hindus exceeds that found among Westerners. Thus, while Kakar stresses the cultural acceptability of Hindu dependency needs, his theoretical approach, almost against his will, forces us to view such needs as pathological.

In fact, despite the overt attack on Carstairs' spoiling theory, Kakar finds another way of explicitly asserting the pathogenic character of the Hindu mother-child interaction. Kakar argues that the closeness between the Hindu mother and her male child borders dangerously on premature sexual seductiveness (1978: 87–103). Kakar notes that the status of the young Hindu mother is tied to the bearing of children, particularly sons. He argues that the importance of a male child to his mother prompts in her an untoward emotional investment — an investment unconsciously communicated to the child through excessive physical ministrations. This seductiveness is heightened, Kakar

argues, by the relative coolness of Hindu husband-wife relations. In all too many cases, Kakar asserts, the Hindu child is his mother's chief emotional outlet. Even as Kakar rejects Carstairs' spoiling theory, then, its pattern is restored under the heading of seduction.

Kakar's seduction theory is significant for the emphasis it places on the emotional quality of the mother's physical attentions. Consider, for example, the passage in which Kakar sets forth his view:

> An Indian mother, as we have shown, preconsciously experiences her new born infant, especially a son, as the means by which her 'motherly' identity is crystallized, her role and status in family and society established. She tends to perceive a son as a kind of saviour and to nurture him with gratitude and even reverence as well as with affection and care. For a range of reasons, the balance of nurturing may be so affected that the mother unconsciously demands that the child serve as an object of her own unfulfilled desires and wishes, however antithetical they may be to his own. The child feels compelled then to *act* as her saviour. Faced with her unconscious intimations and demands, he may feel confused, helpless and inadequate, frightened by his mother's overwhelming nearness and yet unable (and partly unwilling) to get away. In his fantasy, her presence acquires the ominous visage of the 'bad mother' (Kakar 1978: 88–9).

Kakar here assumes that the mother's 'overwhelming nearness' flows from and communicates to the child an intense emotional involvement. I argue, however, that traditional psychoanalytic interpretations of Hindu child rearing err in drawing conclusions about the emotional character of early mother-child relationships from such physical data. While it may be true that a Hindu mother is 'grateful' for the birth of a son and even that the son is 'revered', it is misleading to characterize the quality of this gratitude and reverence as excessive emotional involvement. Language like 'gratitude and even reverence . . . affection and care', as used in the passage above, clearly implies a Western-style intimacy or 'love' relationship between mother and child — a relation that I shall argue is not truly present in the Hindu case. Kakar compounds the difficulty when he notes that the seductive 'bad mother' theme in India differs from its Western counterpart only in that it is more 'pervasive' and 'intense'. In fact, the emotional tone of the Hindu mother-child relationship is quite

different from that found in the West, and I argue that this difference is best conceived of as one of kind rather than degree.[3]

As noted, although Kakar makes only the most cursory reference to it (Kakar 1978: 193), he is aware of Leigh Minturn's study of Hindu child rearing (Minturn and Hitchcock 1966). Yet the central thrust of Minturn's study is the assertion that while the Hindu mother and child are physically close, this physical closeness is unaccompanied by the emotional relation it would betoken in the West. Kakar's description of the seductively intimate mother-child bond — a description constructed out of early observations, such as those by Carstairs, and out of Kakar's own analyses of Hindu symbol and fantasy — cannot survive critical examination based on more recent anthropological field studies of Hindu child rearing. Before critiquing the analysts from an ethnographic standpoint, however, consideration of the work of Alan Roland, the most recent psychoanalytic student of Hindu culture, is in order.

While his work resembles Carstairs' and Kakar's in many essentials, Roland makes a more radical effort than Kakar to break free of Carstairs' invidious distinction between Hindu and Western child rearing. Roland is particularly aware of how deeply such judgments are embedded in theory (1988: 312–33). Given that Western child rearing norms are part and parcel of psychoanalytic developmental theory, Roland points out, it is inevitable that cultures raising children differently than we do will appear pathogenic. By making this point clearly and explicitly, Roland prepares us for a revision in psychoanalytic theory itself. Moreover, Roland moves in the direction of such a revision by elaborating the notion of a Hindu 'we-self' — a kind of group ego in which a given individual is embedded (1988: 242–88). From the perspective of Roland's we-self theory, there is something more than mere cultural support for the Hindu child's so-called dependence or lack of individuation. There are, instead, culturally distinctive psychological structures with their own pattern of normalcy and their own line of development.

The advance represented by Roland's notion of the we-self, however, is compromised by the traditional theoretical context in which he continues to embed it. This theoretical framework, in turn, rests on Roland's acceptance of a factual account of Hindu child rearing that differs very little from that of Carstairs

(Roland 1988: 230–5). As with Carstairs and Kakar, Roland derives evidence of a strong emotional bond from the physical closeness of the Hindu mother and her child. That is, Roland takes a physical closeness — extreme by Western standards in both quality and length — to indicate that the early symbiotic union between the Hindu mother and her child is carefully prolonged rather than gradually transcended. Thus, despite his stated goal of developing a distinctive Hindu path of psychological development — one with its own norm and structure — Roland is pulled toward a view of Hindu development as giving exaggerated expression to certain trends in its Western counterpart. This is because for Roland the nature of the union between Hindu mother and child is not qualitatively different from that found in the West. Rather, the Hindu mother-child relationship is an extension of patterns familiar to us.

Roland sets forth some of his central ideas in the following passages:

> I sense that this ongoing mirroring in Indian relationships . . . goes way beyond mirroring in adult American relationships. It is from these empathic observations that I conclude that the narcissistic dimension is more pervasive, more intense, and in general of more paramount importance in Indian . . . psychological and social functioning than in American. . . .
>
> How does this intricate patterning of we-self regard develop? And to what extent does it differ from the predominant mode of child development in America? Self psychology posits the significant emotional investment and empathic resonance that mothers have with their children as being central to an infant's and young child's basic sense of inner esteem; and Indian mothers in particular seem to make an extraordinary investment in their children. . . . Intense, prolonged maternal involvement in the first four or five years with the young child, with adoration of the young child to the extent of treating him or her as god-like . . . develops a central core of heightened narcissistic well-being in the child. Mothers, grandmothers, aunts, servants, older sisters, and cousin-sisters are all involved in the pervasive mirroring that is incorporated into an inner core of extremely high feelings of esteem. But it is clear that the subtle expectations and valuing are not for the increasingly autonomous exploratory behavior of the American toddler, . . . but rather for the child's growing emotional interdependence and sensitivity to others (Roland 1988: 246, 248, 249).

Here Roland locates the source of the we-self in an extremely 'intense' narcissistic union between the Hindu mother and her child, a union characterized by powerful 'empathic resonance' or emotional 'mirroring'. Clearly, Roland is arguing that Western patterns of early mothering are taken to extremes in the Hindu case.

Roland does give a role to the family group in these passages, but this role is modeled on that of the mother. Empathic mirroring from both the mother and others is said to train a child in inter-dependence and emotional sensitivity. In this scheme, then, the group acts not as a counter to the narcissistic union with the mother but helps to extend that union to the social whole.

To be sure, toward the close of his treatment of the Hindu 'spiritual self', Roland offers a counterpoint to this vision of Hindu personality as an extreme development of certain Western psychological trends. The bulk of Roland's analysis of what he calls the Hindu spiritual self focuses on continuities between the child's early, intense experience of symbiosis with the mother and themes of unity in Hindu life (1988: 289–306). Like others, Roland points to similarities between the Hindu sense of unity with the universe and the early experience of unity with the mother and the larger family. In a final, brief 'counterpoint' to this discussion, however, Roland points in another direction (ibid.: 307–10).

He argues that the notion of detachment from immediate emotional connection, a theme central to Hindu spirituality, in some sense marks out the spiritual self as a realm of autonomy within the larger Hindu experience of unity. He cites, for example, stories in which individuals are actually able to fulfil family responsibilities more competently and confidently when they practice a spiritual detachment from emotional bonds. Thus, Roland is able to argue that Hindu narcissism, although extreme by our standards, does not become pathological. This is because an overall symbiosis is balanced by an inner, 'spiritual' autonomy that is different from the one found in the West, but that nonetheless assures a healthy course of development.

I think Roland is on the right track here. The overall analysis, however, is seriously hampered by his emphasis on narcissism and by his acceptance of the traditional psychoanalytic view of Hindu child rearing. Roland provides no clear grounding in child rearing

practices for the detachment he finds in the spiritual self. Thus, Roland's interest in detachment remains merely a counterpoint to his overwhelming emphasis on narcissism and symbiosis. As we saw in the passage quoted above, this is because Roland implicates a Hindu child's natural mother, along with the many other mothering persons, in a pervasive mirroring process. From this point of view, the attention directed to the child by the family extends the narcissistic union of mother and child to the group as a whole.

The difficulty with this idea of pervasive narcissism in Hindu family life, as I argue below, is that neither the mother nor the other family members are engaged in an intimate exchange or reflection of emotions with the child. Moreover, I maintain that the natural mother's stance toward the child differs significantly from that of the family at large. These differences act to push the child away from the connection to the natural mother and toward connection with the family group. I argue that it is this push away from the mother and toward the group that generates the Hindu emphasis on detachment from emotional bonds. From this perspective, then, the link with the group does not so much extend the child's sense of unity with the mother as it introduces the child to a sense of belonging quite contrary to his selfish desire for exclusive possession of the mother. This, in turn, explains why Hindu spirituality links detachment — an overcoming of selfishness — with the discovery of unity.

In this view, then, the early sense of unbounded unity characteristic of primary narcissism is not simply transferred unbroken from the mother to the family. On the contrary, heretofore neglected complexities in the early Hindu caretaker-child interaction break primary narcissism in a culturally distinctive way. This breaking of primary narcissism explodes the Hindu child's sense that he and the mother exist in an unbounded, symbiotic union. Indeed, the passing of primary narcissism allows the Hindu child to recognize his mother as a distinct self with distinct interests and thus to selfishly seek exclusive possession of her as an object. At this point, a selfishly attached child is left to discover, or rediscover, a complex and highly transformed sense of unity by sacrificing a desire for exclusive possession of the mother and moving toward immersion in the group. The model of the Hindu psyche I elaborate below is built upon this tension between the

child's selfish attachment to the mother and his more detached immersion in the group. I argue, therefore, that we must break far more radically from current empirical and theoretical approaches to Hindu psychology than does Roland.[4]

The alternative view of Hindu psychology I elaborate below proceeds from the critique of Carstairs, Kakar, and Roland set forth in this chapter. Thus we turn to several anthropological field studies that provide data needed to transform our understanding of current psychoanalytic accounts. These studies do not so much expose the analysts as mistaken as they reveal the problematic way in which data on Hindu child rearing have heretofore been interpreted.

The most wide-ranging anthropological study of Hindu child rearing is that of Leigh Minturn.[5] Although Minturn's study paints a picture sharply at variance with that of Carstairs, she agrees with the psychoanalysts on many particulars (1966: 105–13). The mother is the primary caretaker in the early years: carrying the child frequently, sleeping with it, and nursing on demand. There is little effort to control urination or defecation, and soiling accidents thus go unpunished. Despite these points of agreement, however, Minturn shows the emotional context in which this physical care operates to be entirely different from what a psychoanalytic observer might expect. Consider these extended excerpts from Minturn's account:

> During the day, when the infant is not in need of food or some other attention, it is placed on a cot with a quilt or sheet entirely covering it, to protect it from insects and envious glances. Babies are often so well hidden by piles of quilts that one cannot detect their presence. Generally, unless the baby cries, no one pays any attention to it, and it lies well covered in the midst of the busy courtyard until it expresses its demands in loud and persistent crying. Children, particularly boys, who have been born after several years of barrenness or after the death of several children, may be accorded more attention. . . .
>
> The life of the Rajput baby is, aside from the daily bath, bland and free from stress, but it is also free from deliberate creative stimulation. A person in the village is viewed as a member of a group rather than as an individual. . . .
>
> Whereas a mother who conceives of her child as a unique individual emphasizes how he differs from other children, the Rajput mother, for whom all people are but transient elements in a permanent group structure, insists that 'all children are alike'.

This attitude is, no doubt, accentuated the fact that the village mother has had far more experience with children than a mother raised in an isolated nuclear family. She has grown up in a household where the advent of a new baby was a fairly common occurrence. She has seen babies born, seen them nurse, seen them live and grow up, and seen them die. She has cared for a younger sibling or cousin herself. Furthermore, she has her own children in the company of older women to whom childbirth is a familiar experience. Therefore, babies are neither the objects of interest nor the objects of anxiety that they are in this country. A mother does not fear that her child is sick every time it cries; she knows better. But, by the same token, she is not as delighted with its smile because she also knows that all babies smile. She therefore continues with her usual routine, attends to her infant's needs but does not hover over it or 'drop everything' to rush to its side. . . .

The elderly men who sometimes care for babies may 'play' with them, but usually neither the women nor the girls who go about their own activities with a baby on their hips spend much time interacting with the child. The baby receives attention only when it cries or fusses. When it thus exhibits distress, the mother, another woman, its child nurse, or even a young child of four or five will attempt to soothe the baby back to quiescence. When it becomes quiet, its detractors leaves it. Adult interaction with babies is generally aimed at producing a cessation of response than a stimulation of it. . . .

Thus the baby spends his first two years as a passive observer of the busy courtyard life. He is never alone, never the center of attention (Minturn and Hitchcock 1966: 107, 110, 112).

Even as Minturn confirms in these passages points made by earlier observers, she transforms our understanding of these facts. For example, Kakar's point about the attention lavished by a mother on a male child is borne out, yet such attention appears less intense than Kakar would have it and more rare as well. Most important, the special relationship between the Hindu mother and her son appears here as a variation on a distinctive Hindu pattern rather than as a mere intensification of a style of intimacy found in the West. Further, feeding on demand is noted, yet cast in a new light. The response to crying is real enough but less swift and emotionally laden than many have assumed. The offer of the breast is meant to placate the child and thus to free up the mother's attention for work. Nursing is not, therefore, an occasion through which mother and child cement an emotional union. The child is

frequently fed, yet the mother seldom lingers to mirror the baby's satisfaction. Thus, while the child no doubt develops a strong emotional attachment to the mother as a result of the physical gratification she provides, the mother does not respond by setting up a Western-style loving, emotional partnership. To what extent, then, does such mothering deserve Carstairs' designation of 'too good'? Indeed, to what extent does such mothering appear, as Kakar would have it, 'seductive'? Given Minturn's account, terms like 'spoiling', overindulgence', or 'seduction' seem awkward misreadings of a pattern of physical closeness that cannot fairly be understood as a simple exaggeration of emotional tendencies familiar to us in the West.

The psychoanalysts might reply here that their theories refer to the inner meaning of external behaviour. From this perspective, evidence should include not simply the ethnography of child rearing but also subjective material from dreams, myths, and clinical psychoanalyses. Indeed, analysts might caution against deducing too much from strictly observational evidence like that of Minturn. Perhaps, despite seeming emotional distance, mere physical closeness is sufficient to communicate a message of intimacy.

This is a valid caution, yet one that potentially enables any problematic set of subjective meanings to be read indefinitely into behavioural material. Moreover, current psychoanalytic views of Hindu child rearing do not so much reveal the inner meaning of overt emotional distancing behaviour as they ignore such behaviour altogether. It is significant, for example, that neither Carstairs, Kakar nor Roland have ever directly come to grips with Minturn's work. Moreover, the revised psychoanalysis of Hindu culture I offer below is not based on observational data alone. The approach to Hindu child rearing practices introduced in this chapter will soon be matched and deepened by a reading of more purely symbolic data from myths, fantasy, and clinical psychoanalyses as well as by an alternative reading of the data on Hindu child rearing. In order to support this alternative interpretation, I want to do more than simply contradict the traditional psychoanalytic view of Hindu upbringing. On the contrary, I intend to argue here that the parallels between Minturn's and Carstairs' accounts of Hindu child rearing go further than the obvious correspondences noted above. Beneath Carstairs' overt account

— an account fundamental to all later psychoanalytic work on India — lies evidence that bears out Minturn's characterization of the emotional tone of Hindu child rearing — the very point on which the two authors seem most at odds. Thus, Carstairs himself provides us with important evidence for an alternative reading of the Hindu child rearing situation.

A comparison of Carstairs and Minturn can begin with their seemingly divergent descriptions of weaning. Here is Minturn's account:

> Most mothers said they had no trouble weaning their children. A few reported that the children had troubled them for three or four days. One mother said that her child cried off and on for 20 days; this was the most extreme case of emotional upset due to weaning reported to us.
>
> Chilies or *nim* leaves, which are bitter, may be put on the breast to aid in a difficult weaning, but since the mothers are reluctant to use such punitive measures, they rarely resort to this practice. Two mothers told us that they were using *nim* leaves to wean their children, but in both cases we saw the children nursing without protest. One mother held the leaves in her hand while nursing but did not use them. . . . The fact that the children are usually getting supplementary milk and some solid food before weaning is instituted seems to make it a relatively easy adjustment. The children we saw did not show signs of emotional upset, and, according to the mothers' reports, the children rarely tried to resume nursing after the birth of a second child (Minturn and Hitchcock 1966: 115).

Compare this to Carstairs' account:

> Suckling is moderately prolonged, weaning taking place usually at two and a half years. By this time, the child is eating quite a generous diet, and the surrender of the breast might not seem to violent a wrench. Still, I was told, it usually provokes many days' crying and anger, because the child has not been accustomed to being thwarted. The mother may cover her nipples with a bitter paste until weaning is established; or rarely she may leave the child for three days (Carstairs 1967: 63–4).

The facts seem almost identical. Interpretation creates the difference. Both accounts speak of supplementary diets before weaning, days of crying, and devices to discourage breast-feeding. The major factual difference is Minturn's point about the limited application of discouraging devices. In any case, despite

considerable areas of factual agreement, Carstairs suggests weaning difficulties while Minturn speaks of easy weaning. Carstairs seems to view weaning in light of his belief that early maternal indulgence leads to poor tolerance of frustration. A close reading of Carstairs, however, shows that even his account of early maternal indulgence is undercut by an awareness of certain difficulties pressing in on even very young children.

Carstairs separates child care into an early period of excessive maternal indulgence and attention and a later period of loss of exclusive and consistent mothering. Nevertheless, this sharp distinction between early indulgence and later frustration is continually blurred. The child is weaned at about two-and-a-half years, and at times this seems to be Carstairs' dividing line (1967: 63–4, 158). On the other hand, he sometimes places the changeover at one-and-a-half or two years of age (1967: 157). Further, Carstairs notes that even before the age of one-and-a-half the child is confronted with major, ongoing traumata — the regular witnessing of parental intercourse (which begins not more than six months after birth) and the periodic and inexplicably distant parental behavior when a grandparent enters the room (1967: 157–8). (Recall that in Hindu India it is thought improper to fondle or pay attention to one's child in the presence of elders.)

Let us examine this last point more closely. According to Carstairs:

> [The mother] must look on impassively while the grandmother makes much of her child — unless the child starts to cry. Only then is she entitled to assert her first claim to 'mother' her baby, by clasping it in her arms and giving it the breast.
>
> In this setting the pattern becomes established that a mother is an attentive but pre-occupied person, whose feelings only become apparent when the child cries to her in distress — and then she hurries to supply all his wants (Carstairs 1967: 66).

This passage clearly recalls Minturn. The mother is attentive but 'preoccupied'. She shows her feelings only when the child cries. Carstairs, in fact, at times portrays this as the ongoing an typical mothering situation: 'In this setting, the pattern becomes established. . . .'

On the other hand, Carstairs elsewhere treats this situation as temporary and for the child it is an unpredictable consequence

of the grandmother's (i.e., mother-in-law's) presence. In his theoretical summation, Carstairs clearly speaks of distancing as a temporary effect:

> Already, before these years [i.e., before the age of one-and-half or two years] the child will have cause to notice that his mother, though devoted to his service, is unaccountably inconstant in the warmth of her contact with him. At times she caresses him affectionately while at other times, owing to the presence of her parents-in-law, she becomes aloof and seemingly indifferent to him (Carstairs 1967: 157).

The passage by Carstairs quoted directly before this implies a long-term and consistent attitude of mothering resembling that described by Minturn. I suggest Carstairs saw this pattern, yet ultimately took it as temporary because of his belief that the Hindu mother's intense physical ministrations indicate the same desire for symbiosis as they would in the West. Underneath the grandmother's enforced restraint, the mother is assumed to hold feelings like those of the Western mother, 'feelings [that] only become apparent when the child cries to her in distress'. Yet, as I think Carstairs implies and as Minturn states, this pattern is not simply a periodic consequence of the elders' presence — although it is surely heightened by that presence — but the ongoing form of mother-child relations in India. It possesses its own consistency and its own psychological underpinning. Moreover, even if we regard the mother's habitual stance as a result of the mother-in-law's continuous supervision of mother and child, we must be prepared to identify an internal consistency and psychological underpinning for this very pattern of multiple caretaking. Carstairs, however, thinking in individualist terms, focuses on the mother alone, thus overemphasizing the artificial nature of the grandmother's presence. Carstairs' consequent attempt to isolate a prior and pure indulgent intimacy between mother and child explains why he remains unclear on the extent of the mother's distracted attention, and it accounts for his periodic attempts to move up the time when excessively good mothering ends and harsh mothering begins.

It is even possible to detect in Carstairs' portrayal of the child as 'king' an echo of Minturn's view of the infant as the passive, unmirrored observer of courtyard life. For example, when Carstairs discusses the long hours spent by the Hindu child in the

cradle, he stresses the sensuous pleasure of the frequent rocking provided by adults (1967: 64–5). Noting that Hindu kings and gods are honoured by similar rocking, Carstairs sees the hours in the cradle as an extension of the 'royal indulgence' accorded the child. Minturn, on the other hand, stresses the covering of the child in the cradle, along with the absence of direct eye contact with the women of the family courtyard (1966: 107, 112). No doubt, in her view, rocking would appear chiefly as a way to keep the child passive, placated, and relatively uninvolved with his caretaker, however much pleasure the child may experience from the motion itself. Again, while the two accounts are not in complete contradiction, interpretation is all. Certainly, as Carstairs would have it, the rocking of the cradle gratifies the child. Even so, Carstairs' emphasis can mislead a reader into viewing the Hindu parent-child relation as one of extreme personal intimacy. As Minturn shows, this is too simple.

Minturn's is by no means the only observational study to cast doubt on the consensus psychoanalytic account of Hindu child rearing. Although studies of child rearing have been and continue to be relegated to the periphery of contemporary anthropological concern, a modest ethnographic literature on Hindu child-rearing practices has nonetheless developed in the years following Minturn's pioneering study. Unfortunately, researchers of Hindu child rearing receive little attention — even from each other — and therefore the literature as a whole remains disorganized and unselfconscious. Careful consideration of the literature on Hindu child rearing practices, however, does reveal consensus on a surprising number of issues. In particular, there is wide support for assessment of the emotional character of the Hindu mother-child relationship.

Susan Seymour, for example, is one of the few researchers of Hindu child rearing to match Minturn in experience and expertise. In a number of publications she explicitly echoes Minturn's view:

> In general, the care of children in Bhubaneswar was strikingly casual and impersonal. Children were taken for granted and their basic needs attended to, but they received little other special attention or stimulation. The situation was similar to that described for Khalapur, India, by Minturn and Hitchcock (Seymour 1975: 47).
>
> While children were greatly desired, once born, they were tended

> to be treated as one more member of the household, not as a special individual deserving of special attention. In fact, there were taboos against praising or focusing attention on infants for fear of attracting the Evil Eye or other maloccurrences (Seymour 1983: 269).

Even some more psychoanalytically oriented observers clearly confirm Minturn's account. For example, Renaldo Maduro, a Jungian-influenced anthropologist, has done important but neglected work among a group of Brahman artists. Compare his account of feeding and cradling to that of Minturn and Castairs.

> In Nathdwara, it is a disgrace for Brahmin mothers not to attend immediately to a whimpering child. If the mother is not at once available, then other women in the household (including older siblings) may fill in for her by rocking and singing the child to sleep. . . .
>
> The child's passivity during the rocking and swinging is important for his personality formation. From infancy, he is expected to remain passive and unresponsive. And although they attend to his every need, his parents are in a real sense distant too. Ironically, the cradle-swing relationship is impersonal, for the child need not be held, cuddled, or treated sensually; in fact, any member of the household — even young children — can be assigned the monotonous task of mechanically pulling a string to keep an infant in motion and contented. Outside the feeding situation (a warm close experience at the breast), less physical contact and libidinal stimulation was observed between Brahmin mothers and their children than among lower castes. Painters are very often nostalgic for the days of being rocked to sleep. . . .
>
> Painter children are breast-fed on demand for approximately two years (or longer) and may continue to find solace at mother's or grandmother's breast for many years thereafter. At the slightest noise signifying discomfort, mothers habitually thrust the breast into the young child's mouth to pacify him. . . . However, rarely is a child actively stimulated during the attention paid to him; while breastfeeding, he is still largely a receiver, and inside and outside this sphere little or nothing is done to encourage vigorous activity or to permit frustration and aggression which would, in normal doses, further the work of ego structuring and separation (Maduro 1976: 160–1).

Once again, while the sensual satisfaction of feeding and cradle-rocking are present, the emotional character of the mother-child relation is one of distance. Physical contact with and gratification of the child does not occasion a loving mirroring of emotions as

it would in the West. The child, as a unique individual, seems almost not to exist.

Yet Maduro's psychoanalytic approach is able to assimilate data like Minturn's without this having marked consequences on its conclusions. Whereas for Carstairs overindulgence indicates a dangerous psychological closeness between mother and child, for Maduro physical closeness combined with emotional distance is equally dangerous. What Maduro seeks and finds lacking in Hindu child rearing is the gradual training in independence that both Freudian and Jungian theory claim is necessary. Whatever departs from this norm is taken as either too much *or* too little of a good thing. In similar fashion, Carstairs avoids the contradiction evident in his description of frustrations brought on by so-called too good Hindu mothering. While feeding on demand is condemned by Carstairs as a 'too good' overindulgence that leads to oral fixation, the Hindu mother's distancing in the presence of the mother-in-law is productive of the same fixation, this time by virtue of its 'inconstancy'.

Like Maduro and Carstairs, Alan Roland encounters, if only briefly, reports that echo Minturn's stress on the disjunction between physical ministration and emotional attention in Hindu mothering. As with Maduro and Carstairs, however, such data do not alter basic conclusions. Roland never refers to Minturn's own research, but he does mention a personal communication from two students of Hindu child rearing. Here is the passage:

> There is a subtle inhibition of too great self-other differentiation and separation through the amount of gratification and closeness an Indian child experiences. This decidedly contrasts with the 'optimal' frustrations of the Western child, which foster the inner separation process of the child from the mother. While there is a great deal of affection, emotional and physical gratification, and empathic awareness of the child's dependency needs, there is often very little empathy with the more autonomous and individualized strivings of the child (personal communication, Dr Bhutta and Erna Hoch) — again central to both the separation and individuation processes in Western children (Roland 1998: 233).

Here, Roland assimilates the comments of Bhutta and Hoch by distinguishing an empathic awareness of 'dependency needs' from empathic concerns for 'individualized strivings'. Thus, Roland is able to retain the notion that Hindu child rearing

highlights the mirroring of emotions, even as he acknowledges that at least some important emotions are, in fact, not mirrored. It is questionable whether the child-rearing situation described by Roland ought even to be characterized as an 'intense' experience of mirroring since mirroring is here said to be restricted to very particular sorts of emotions. I argue, however, that the alleged mirroring of a Hindu child's nonindividualized strivings is an illusion. Roland, like Carstairs and Kakar before him, is here reading into the intense 'gratification and closeness' of the Hindu mother-child situation the essentially Western emotional stance of empathy. In fact, the emotional contact and awareness that the Westerners associate with physical closeness is absent from the Hindu situation, whether it is a question of mirroring a child's autonomous strivings or otherwise.

The problematic use of 'empathy' or 'mirroring' as concepts emerges also in Roland's interpretation of adult behaviour, where he sees in Hindu sensitivity to the honour and standing of the group a 'subtly constant, but mainly nonverbal' form of 'mirroring' (1988: 246). Here again, by interpreting a Hindu phenomenon as both a heightened, yet subtle and nonverbal version of our highly verbal and interactive Western notion of empathic attention, Roland stretches our Western notions of empathy and mirroring to the breaking point. By retaining these concepts in cases of admittedly nonverbal interaction, I think, Roland makes it too easy to read Western patterns of subjectivity into behaviour that has its own distinctive psychological roots. Elsewhere, in a reworked account of the Hindu child-rearing situation, I spell out an alternative reading of the nonverbal closeness characteristic of the Hindu mother-child relationship.

To summarize, psychoanalysts generally take observational data on physical contact in Hindu infancy as evidence of sensual overindulgence and of extreme, even dangerous, emotional closeness. Evidence that suggests a distinction between physical and emotional closeness in the Hindu case is customarily downplayed, for such data imply that the underlying rationale of Hindu child rearing is fundamentally different from any we are familiar with. When forced to confront such information, however, psychoanalysts treat any absence of personal attention as a frustration every bit as productive of early fixation as excessive gratification.

As Roland notes, albeit without fully recognizing the problem's impact on his own work, this way of thinking involves a kind of trick. In the absence of the approved Western mode of child rearing, all diverse cultural practices come off as too much or too little of a good thing. Whatever is foreign to the classic Western notion of proper child rearing thus appears pathogenic. However much a given analyst might wish to escape this outcome, the logic is too deeply built into the theory to be circumvented without fundamental change.

Notes

1. Philip Spratt's psychoanalytic study of Hindu culture and personality (1977) relies in part on Carstairs' observations and theories, supplemented by Spratt's experience as a long-time resident of India. I do not discuss Spratt at length because to my way of thinking his work is fundamentally consistent with that of Carstairs, Kakar, and Roland. Nonetheless, specialists will certainly wish to consult it.

   Medard Boss, a Swiss psychoanalyst, has also written an extended study of Hindu culture and personality (1965). Boss' work is based on brief visits to India in 1956 and 1958. His observations are entirely consistent with those of Carstairs (Boss 1965: 67–88). While he is not referred to by Roland, he is known to Kakar and does seem to have exercised some influence, particularly in his discussion of the allegedly traumatic 'crackdown' instituted around age five (Boss 1965: 72–4). Nonetheless, Boss' treatment of this and other issues is essentially identical with that of Carstairs, and it is Carstairs who seems to have most clearly and directly influenced modern psychoanalytic students of Hinduism.
2. Regrettably, this Chapter focuses on the situation of the Hindu boy. This is because psychoanalytic treatments of early Hindu childhood, which I here rework, take the boy as their main subject. This is reflected, for example, in the psychoanalytic emphasis on the father's role in the so-called crack-down around age five, the Hindu father having more control over the discipline of his son than of his daughter. Nonetheless, the theory presented in this and the following chapters has great bearing on the situation of the Hindu girl, as the basic pattern of mother-child and group-child interaction described applies

to both sexes. Moreover, I do hope that my work will prompt research that directly and systematically considers the situation of the Hindu girl from a reworked psychoanalytic point of view.

3. I have been examining Kakar's early and programmatic work, *The Inner World* (1978). It is important to note, however, that the theoretical position of *The Inner World*, including its unresolved tension between relativism and universalism, is maintained intact throughout Kakar's later writings (Kakar 1982a, 1985, 1990a, 1990b; Kakar and Ross 1987).

For example, in an essay published several years after *The Inner World*, Kakar again takes up the theoretical problem of psychoanalysis and culture (Kakar 1985). As in *The Inner World*, Kakar challenges the notion that the intense physical contact involved in early Hindu Indian maternal care has negative psychological consequences. Such a judgment, Kakar maintains, flows from our Western preference for autonomy and is not applicable in the Hindu context, where cultural value is placed on close relationships. As in *The Inner World*, however, this position is undermined by Kakar's attempt to preserve traditional psychoanalytic theory. Kakar wishes simply to limit or moderate the theory's implications rather than to actively reshape psychoanalysis to fit a new cultural context.

As noted, Kakar begins his essay by questioning the basis on which we judge foreign child rearing practices to be either excessively gratifying or dangerously frustrating. Because Hindu Indian children are accustomed to great stimulation and because Indian culture explicitly values close relationships rather than autonomy, Kakar argues that the traditionally heavy physical contact between a Hindu mother and her child is neither dangerous nor excessive (1985: 442). The difficulty is that in Kakar's analysis the gratification/frustration dichotomy is itself never reformulated into or replaced by a positive, alternative principle according to which Hindu development can be seen to take place. Therefore, Kakar ultimately affirms the universality of the 'developmental constants' posited by psychoanalysis and defines his task as setting boundaries to these constants or moderating their importance in a given cultural setting (1985: 444). Kakar quotes with approval Erikson's dictum that the physiologically based stages of development vary in timing and intensity from culture to culture, but not in their sequence (1985: 444). What I suggest below,

however, is that the developmental stages vary culturally not in their timing or intensity but in their fundamental structure and content. I argue that the developmental stages and the principles according to which they operate have to be radically reformulated in every culture or culture area, and this is a task Kakar explicitly elects not to undertake.

As a result, Kakar can never really explain *why* Hindu culture places more value on relationships than on autonomy. This difference in value is simply taken to act as a kind of moderating boundary on the action of universal psychoanalytic principles. In contradistinction to this position, I hope to show that the Hindu cultural preference for relationships needs to be brought deeply into our psychological theory, leading to a reformulated 'cultural psychoanalysis'. Because Kakar keeps psychoanalytic concepts intact within cultural 'boundaries', his maternal seduction theory remains central to all his later work (see especially Kakar 1982a: 161–5, 1989, 1990a, 1990b: 129–40; Kakar and Ross 1987: 186–90). As I have shown in the above discussion of *The Inner World*, this theory of the dangerously seductive Hindu mother surreptitiously restores the traditional psychoanalytic notion that Hindu mothering offers an experience of excessive gratification — the very notion Kakar sets out to criticize.

Despite these unresolved tensions within his thought, it is not entirely true that Kakar proposes no positive modification of traditional psychoanalytic theory. Kakar does suggest that several contemporary schools of psychoanalytic thought hold the key to a more culturally sensitive understanding of the Hindu Indian psyche. This is because the work of analysts such as Mahler, Winnicott, Kernberg, Kohut, and Erikson focuses more on relationships than on control of an individual's drives (Kakar 1985: 446). Kakar argues that there is a powerful congruence between the Hindu cultural devaluation of autonomy and the work of these recent, more relationally oriented psychoanalytic theorists.

The difficulty with this view is that contemporary relational models of psychoanalysis are pervaded by precisely the value on autonomy Kakar finds to be inappropriate for understanding the Hindu Indian psyche. While modern analysts do focus more directly than classical theorists on a complex and necessary set of interactions between mother and child, the emphasis is

invariably on the way in which these interactions effect a development away from symbiosis and toward autonomy. If anything, it could be argued that because of its pervasive emphasis on the process of separation and individuation, contemporary psychoanalytic theory is even more individualist than classical drive theory. Indeed, Suzanne Kirschner (1990) has presented us with just such an argument. In her elegant essay she makes the case that early European psychoanalysis has been modified by theorists like Mahler, Winnicott, Kohut, and Erikson to express the highly developed individualism characteristic of Anglo-American culture. Elsewhere she extends her argument by focusing on the work of Kernberg and Kohut (Kirschner 1991).

Whatever our final judgment on the cultural and historical roots of changes within the psychoanalytic tradition, individualism in one form or another can be found at the foundation of each psychoanalytic school of thought. However much human relations are brought into the analysis, the emphasis is always on the eventual move toward autonomy. Thus, we must look elsewhere than to contemporary schools of psychoanalytic thought for the key to theoretical changes that can successfully adapt psychoanalytic thinking to the Hindu Indian scene.

4. This brief account will become less mysterious as an alternative model of Hindu child development is elaborated. While I have noted here that the child comes to desire the mother as a separate self, this should not be confused with our Western notion of individuation. The idea of individuation builds on a core recognition of separate identities, but adds to this basic notion of separation the concept of a long, complex, and — in my view — culturally specific process whereby an individual self is fully formed. Thus psychoanalysts generally speak of a process of 'separation-individuation'. My description of Hindu development, however, might be characterized as a 'separation-integration' model. From this perspective, primary narcissism is overcome by way of the Hindu mother's distinctive combination of physical presence and emotional distance and also by the family group's efforts to pull the child away from its mother. In the early stages of the process, the child's sense of separateness and desire is relatively strong. Toward the end of the process, the child is fully integrated into the family group, and its selfish infantile desires are consequently renounced.

5. Minturn's work was published in collaboration with John T. Hitchcock (Minturn and Hitchcock 1966). In the first part of their book, Hitchcock provides the broad ethnographic background on the village where Minturn's child observations took place. Minturn then reports her child observations in Part II. Thus, I refer only to Minturn when discussing her work in Part II of *The Rajputs of Khalapur, India* (Minturn and Hitchcock 1966).
6. It can be argued that the physical and emotional stance of the Hindu mother, while unlike that found in the West, is nevertheless quite similar to a pattern of mothering characteristic of many non-Western cultures. For example, Robert LeVine (1977) has described a pattern of mothering widely shared by 'tropical' societies, of which the Hindu case is clearly an example. In such places

> we find a certain pattern of bodily proximity, feeding, responsiveness to crying, and absence of disciplinary training that looks 'indulgent' to us, but without the equally 'indulgent' maternal behaviors of smiling, eye contact, face-to-face smile elicitation, chatting, cooing, and kissing that usually supply the psychological context in which we interpret a Western mother's 'indulgent' behavior (LeVine 1977: 23).

How can we approach the comparative problem raised by this broadly dispersed pattern of mothering? I think the key lies in the fact that most 'tropical' cultures — indeed, most non-Western cultures — emphasize the importance of groups as opposed to individuals. As I argue elsewhere (Kurtz 1991), the relative emotional distance of mothers in non-Western cultures provides an opening through which groups can draw children away from immature attachments and toward mature participation in group life.

The precise composition of groups, as well as the principles of behaviour used by these groups to draw the child away from the natural mother vary profoundly from culture to culture or at least between larger culture areas. For example, elsewhere I contrast the situation of the child in the Trobriand Islands with the situation (described below) of the Hindu child. In both Hindu India and the Trobriand Islands, the group intervenes to draw the child away from too close an attachment to the mother. In Hindu India, however, that group consists mainly

of female in-laws in the mother's joint family. In the Trobriand Islands, on the other hand, the group that breaks the child's attachment to the mother is made up chiefly of the father, a wide variety of adults, and various young children of the village. Moreover, in Hindu India, the group breaks the child's immature attachments by subtly inducing voluntary renunciations on the part of the child. In the Trobriands, on the other hand, the group draws the child out of immaturity through an active and very physical process of seduction.

I argue that such differences in the composition and behavioral principles of the groups that exploit the opening provided by the mother's emotional distance link up to profound cultural differences in personality and ideology. Thus, while LeVine correctly points to a widely dispersed general pattern of maternal behavior, one in which Hindu India is surely included, careful attention to specific principles of interaction within this broad pattern and to the precise group context of such interaction will reveal the distinctive nature of a given society's 'mothering'.

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9

Clinical Work and Cultural Imagination

Sudhir Kakar

The perennial question on the cross-cultural validity of psychoanalysis — which actually consists of two questions: Is psychoanalysis at all possible in a traditional non-Western society with its different family system, religious beliefs and cultural values? Is the mental life of non-Western patients radically different from that of their Western counterparts? — evokes strong interest in intellectual circles. Over the years, in my own talks to diverse audiences in Europe and the United States, this particular question has invariably constituted the core of animated discussion. The sharp increase in the scepticism about the transcultural validity of psychoanalysis in recent years is correlated with the rise of relativism in the human sciences. Intellectually, the relativistic position owes much of its impetus to Foucault's powerful argument on the rootedness of all thought in history and culture — and in the framework of power relations. Adherents of this perspective are not *a priori* willing to accept why psychoanalysis, a product of nineteenth century European bourgeois family and social structure, should be an exception to the general rule on the incapacity of thought to transcend its roots. In this paper, I propose to discuss the issue of the culture rootedness of psychoanalysis with illustrations from my own clinical practice in India.

Ramnath was a 51-year-old man who owned a grocery shop in the oldest part of the city of Delhi. When he came to see me some eighteen years ago, he was suffering from a number of

complaints, though he desired my help for only one of them — an unspecified 'fearfulness'. This anxiety, less than three years old, was a relatively new development. His migraine headaches, on the other hand, went back to his adolescence. Ramnath attributed them to an excess of 'wind' in the stomach, which periodically rose up and pressed against the veins in his head. Ramnath had always had a nervous stomach. It is now never quite as bad as it was in the months following his marriage some thirty years ago, when it was accompanied by severe stomach cramps and an alarming weight loss. He was first taken to the hospital by his father, where he was X-rayed and tested. Finding nothing wrong with him, the doctors had prescribed a variety of vitamins and tonics which were not of much help. Older family members and friends had then recommended a nearby *ojha* — 'sorcerer' is too fierce a translation for this mild-mannered professional of ritual exorcism — who diagnosed his condition as the result of magic practiced by an enemy, namely his newly acquired father-in-law. The rituals to counteract the enemy magic were expensive, as was the yellowish liquid emetic prescribed by the *ojha*, which periodically forced Ramnath to empty his stomach with gasping heaves. In any event, he was fully cured within two months of the *ojha*'s treatment, and the cramps and weight loss have not recurred.

Before coming to see me about this 'fearfulness', Ramnath had been treated with drugs by various doctors: by allopaths (as Western-style doctors are called in India) as well as homeopaths, by the *vaids* of Hindu medicine, as well as the *hakims* of Islamic medical tradition. He had consulted psychiatrists, ingested psychotropic drugs, and submitted to therapy. He had gone through the rituals of two *ojhas* and was thinking of consulting a third who was highly recommended.

His only relief came through the weekly gathering of the local chapter of the Brahmakumari (literally 'Virgins of Brahma') sect which he had recently joined. The communal meditations and singing gave him a feeling of temporary peace and his nights were no longer so restless. Ramnath was puzzled by the persistence of his anxious state and its various symptoms. He had tried to be a good man, he said, according to his *dharma*, which is both the 'right conduct' of his caste and the limits imposed by his own character and predispositions. He had worshipped the gods and

attended services in the temple with regularity, even contributing generously toward the consecration of a Krishna idol in his native village in Rajasthan. He did not have any bad habits, he asserted. Tea and cigarettes, yes, but for a couple of years he had abjured even these minor though pleasurable addictions. Yet the anxiety persisted, unremitting and unrelenting.

Since it is culture rather than psyche which is the focus of this presentation, let me essay a cultural rather than a psychological — analysis of Ramnath's condition. At first glance, Ramnath's cognitive space in matters of illness and well-being seems incredibly cluttered. Gods and spirits, community and family, food and drink, personal habits and character, all seem to be somehow intimately involved in the maintenance of health. Yet these and other factors such as biological infection, social pollution, and cosmic displeasure — all of which most Hindus would also acknowledge as causes of ill health — only point to the recognition of a person's simultaneous existence in different orders of being; of the person being of body, a psyche and a social being at the same time. Ramnath's experience of his illness may appear alien to Europeans only because, as I have elaborated elsewhere (Kakar 1982), the body, the psyche, and the community do not possess fixed, immutable meanings across cultures. The concept of the body and the understanding of its processes are not quite the same in India as they are in the West. The Hindu body, portrayed in relevant cultural texts predominantly in imagery from the vegetable kingdom, is much more intimately connected with the cosmos than the clearly etched Western body which is sharply differentiated from the rest of the objects in the universe. The Hindu body image stresses an unremitting interchange taking place with the environment, simultaneously accompanied by ceaseless change within the body. The psyche — the Hindu 'subtle body' — is not primarily a psychological category in India. It is closer to the ancient Greek meaning of the 'psyche', the source of all vital activities *and* psychic process, and considered capable of persisting in its disembodied state after death. Similarly, for many Indians, the community consists not only of living members of the family and the social group but also of ancestral and other spirits as well as the gods and goddesses who populate the Hindu cosmos. An Indian is inclined to believe that his or her illness can reflect a disturbance in any one of these orders of being, while the

symptoms may also be manifested in the other orders. If a treatment, say, in the bodily order fails, one is quite prepared to reassign the cause of the illness to a different order and undergo its particular curing regimen — prayers or exorcisms, for instance — without losing regard for other methods of treatment.

The involvement of all orders of being in health and illness means that an Indian is generally inclined to seek more than one cause for illness in especially intractable cases. An Indian tends to view these causes as complementary rather than exclusive and arranges them in a hierarchical order by identifying an immediate cause, as well as others that are more remote. The causes are arranged in concentric circles, with the outer circle including all the inner ones.

To continue with our example: Ramnath had suffered migraine headaches since his adolescence. Doctors and the system of traditional Hindu medicine, *Ayurveda*, had diagnosed the cause as a humoral disequilibrium — an excess of 'wind' in the stomach which periodically rose up and pressed against the veins in his head — and prescribed Ayurvedic drugs, dietary restrictions as well as liberal doses of aspirin. Such a disequilibrium is usually felt to be compounded by bad habits which, in turn, demand changes in personal conduct. When an illness like Ramnath's persists, its stubborn intensity will be linked with his unfavourable astrological conditions, requiring palliative measures such as a round of prayers (*puja*). The astrological 'fault' probably will be further traced back to the bad karma of a previous birth about which, finally, nothing can be done — except, perhaps, the cultivation of a stoic endurance with the help of the weekly meetings of the Virgins of Brahma sect.

I saw Ramnath thrice a week in psychoanalytic therapy for twenty-one sessions before he decided to terminate the treatment. At the time, although acutely aware of my deficiencies as a novice, I had placed the blame for the failure of the therapy on the patient or, to be more exact, on the cultural factors involved in his decision. Some of these were obvious. Ramnath had slotted me into a place normally reserved for a personal guru. From the beginning, he envisioned not a contractual doctor-patient relationship but a much more intimate guru-disciple bond that would allow him to abdicate responsibility for his life. He was increasingly dismayed that a psychoanalyst did not dispense wise counsel

but expected the client to talk, and that I wanted to follow his lead rather than impose my own views or directions on the course of our sessions. My behaviour also went against the guru model which demands that the therapist demonstrate his compassion, interest, warmth and responsiveness much more openly than I believed is possible or desirable in a psychoanalytic relationship. I did not know then that Ramnath's 'guru fantasy', namely the existence of someone, somewhere — now discovered in my person — who will heal the wounds suffered in all past relationships and remove the blights on the soul so that it shines anew in its pristine state, was not inherent in his Indianness but common across many cultures. Irrespective of their conscious subscription to the ideology of egalitarianism and a more contractual doctor-patient relationship, my European and American patients too approached analysis and the analyst with a full blown guru fantasy which, however, was more hidden and less accessible to consciousness than in the case of Ramnath.

More than Ramnath's expectations, I now realize, it was my state of disappointment on which the analysis floundered. I had expected Ramnath to be an individual in the sense of someone whose consciousness has been moulded in a crucible which is commonly regarded as having come into existence as part of the psychological revolution in the wake of the Enlightenment in Europe. This revolution, of course, is supposed to have narrowed the older, metaphysical scope of the mind to the mind as an isolated island of individual consciousness, profoundly aware of its almost limitless subjectivity and its infantile tendency to heedless projection and illusion. Psychoanalysis, I believed, with some justification, is possible only with a person who is individual in this special sense, who shares, at some level of awareness and to some minimum degree, the modern vision of human experience, wherein each of us lives in his own subjective world, pursuing personal pleasures and private fantasies, constructing a fate which will vanish when our time is over. The reason why in most psychoanalytic case histories, whether in Western or non-Western worlds, analysands, except for their different neurotic or character disturbances, sound pretty much like each other (and like their analysts) is because they all share the post-Enlightenment world-view of what constitutes an individual. In a fundamental sense, psychoanalysis does not have a cross-cultural context but takes

place in the same culture across different societies; it works in the established (and expanding) enclaves of psychological modernity around the world. We can therefore better understand why psychoanalysis in India began in Calcutta — the first capital of the British empire in India, where Indians began their engagement and confrontation with post-Enlightenment Western thought — before extending itself and virtually limiting itself to Bombay, which prides itself on its cosmopolitan character and cultural 'modernity'. It is also comprehensible that the clientele for psychoanalysis in India consists overwhelmingly — though not completely — of individuals (and their family members) who are involved in modern professions like journalism, advertising, academia, medicine and so on. In its sociological profile, at least, this client does not significantly differ from one that seeks psychoanalytic therapy in Europe and America.

Ramnath, I believed, was not an individual in the sense that he lacked 'psychological modernity'. He had manfully tried to understand the psychoanalytic model of inner conflict rooted in life history that was implied in my occasional interventions. It was clear that this went against his cultural model of psychic distress and healing wherein the causes for his suffering lay outside himself and had little to do with his biography — black magic by father-in-law, disturbed planetary constellations, bad karma from previous life, disturbed humoral equilibrium. He was thus not suitable for psychoanalytic therapy, and perhaps I had given up on him before he gave up on me. But Ramnath, I realized later, like many of my other traditional Hindu patients, had an individuality which is embedded in and expressed in terms from the Hindu cultural universe. This individuality is accessible to psychoanalysis if the therapist is willing and able to build the required bridges from a modern to a traditional individuality. The Indian analyst has to be prepared, for instance, to interpret the current problems of such a patient in terms of his or her bad karma — feelings, thoughts and actions — not from a previous existence but from a forgotten life, the period of infancy and childhood, his or her 'pre-history'. Let me elaborate on this distinction between traditional and modern individuals who both share what I believe is the essence of psychological modernity.

Psychological modernity, although strongly associated with post-Enlightenment, is nevertheless not identical with it. The

core of psychological modernity is internalization rather than externalization. I use internalization here as a sensing by the person of a psyche in the Greek sense, an animation from within rather than without. Experientially, this internalization is a recognition that one is possessed of a mind in all its complexity. It is the acknowledgment, however vague, unwilling or conflicted, of a subjectivity that fates one to episodic suffering through some of its ideas and feelings — in psychoanalysis, murderous rage, envy, and possessive desire seeking to destroy those one loves and would keep alive — simultaneously with the knowledge, at some level of awareness, that the mind can help in containing and processing disturbed thoughts, as, indeed, can also the family and the group (Bollas 1992). In Hindu terms, it is a person's sense and acknowledgment of the primacy of the 'subtle body' — the *sukshmasharira* — in human action and of human suffering as caused by the workings of the five passions: sexual desire, rage, greed, infatuation and egotism.

Similarly, Buddhists too describe human suffering as being due to causes internal to the individual: cognitive factors such as a perceptual cloudiness causing misperception of objects of awareness but also affective causes such as agitation and worry — the elements of anxiety, and greed, avarice and envy — which form the cluster of grasping attachment. This *internalization* is the essence of 'individuation', and of psychological modernity, which has always been a part of what Hindus call the 'more evolved' beings in traditional civilizations. The fact that this core of individuation is expressed in a religious rather than a psychological idiom should not prevent us from recognizing its importance as an ideal of maturity in traditional civilizations such as Hindu India; it should also give us pause in characterizing, indeed pathologizing India or any other civilization as one where some kind of familial self (Roland 1990) or group mind (Kurtz 1992) reigns in individual mental life. The 'evolved' Hindu in the past or even in the present, who has little to do with the post-Enlightenment West, thus interprets the *Mahabharata* as an account of inner conflict in man's soul rather than of outer hostilities. The 'evolved beings' in India, including the most respected gurus, have always held that the guru, too, is only seemingly a person but is actually a function, a transitional object in modern parlance, as are all the various gods who are also only

aspects of the self. 'The Guru is the disciple, but perfected, complete', says Muktananda (1983). 'When he forms a relationship with his own best self' (p. ix). At the end of your *sadhana*, burn the guru, say the tantriks; kill the Buddha if you meet him on the way, is a familiar piece of Zen Buddhist wisdom. All of them, gurus or gods (as also the analyst), have served the purpose of internalization — of a specific mode of relating to and experiencing the self — and are dispensable.

Psychological modernity is thus not coterminous with historical modernity; nor are its origins in a specific geographical location, even if it received a sharp impetus from the European Enlightenment. My biggest error in Ramnath's case was in making a sharp dichotomy between a 'Hindu' cultural view of the interpersonal and transpersonal nature of man and a modern 'Western' view of man's individual and instinctual nature and assuming that since Ramnath was not an individual in the latter sense, he was not an individual at all. Although suggestive and fruitful for cultural understanding, the individual/relational differences should not be overemphasized. Even my distinction between traditional and modern individuality is not a sharp one. In reference to his satori or enlightenment, occasioned by the cry of a crow, Ikkyu, a fifteenth century Zen master, known for his colorful eccentricity, suggests the presence of a 'modern' biographical individuality when he writes:

> ten dumb years I wanted things to be different
> furious proud I
> still feel it
> one summer night in my little boat on lake Biwa
> caaaawwweeeee
> father when I was a boy you left us now I forgive you (Berg 1989: 42).

In spite of the cultural highlighting of the inter- and transpersonal, I found my traditional Indian patients more individual in their unconscious than they initially realized. Similarly, in spite of a Western cultural emphasis on autonomous individuality, my European and American patients are more relational than *they* realize. Individual and communal, self and other, are complementary ways of looking at the organization of mental life and exist

in a dialectical relationship to each other although a culture may, over a period of time, stress the importance of one or the other in its ideology of the fulfilled human life and thus shape a person's *conscious* experience of the self in predominantly individual or communal modes. It is undeniable that Indians are very relational, with the family and community (including the family of divinities) playing a dominant role in the experience of the self. It is also undeniable, though less evident, that Indians are very individualistic and, at least in fantasy, are capable of conceiving and desiring a self free of *all* attachments and relationships.

In positing some shared fundamentals for the practice of the psychoanalytic enterprise, I do not mean to imply that there is no difference between analysands from Bombay, Beirut or Birmingham. The middle class, educated, urban Indian, although more individualized in his experience of the self and closer to his Western counterpart on this dimension, is nevertheless not identical with the latter. Contrary to the stance popular among many anthropologists of Indian society, the traditional Hindu villager is not the only Indian there is, the rest being some kind of impostors or cultural deviants. The urban Indian analysand shares with others many of the broader social and cultural patterns which are reflected in the cultural particularities of the self. One of these particularities, frequently met with in case histories and a dominant motif in Hindu myths and other products of cultural imagination, is the centrality of the male Hindu Indian's experience of the powerful mother (Kakar 1978, 1990). Let me first illustrate this more concretely through a vignette.

Pran is a forty-five year old journalist who came to analysis suffering from a general, unspecified anxiety and what he called a persistent feeling of being always on the 'edge'. Until March of this year, Pran's three hundred and twenty sessions have been pervaded by his mother to a degree unsurpassed in my clinical work. For almost two years, four times a week, hour after hour, Pran would recollect what his mother told him on this or that particular occasion, what she thought, believed or said, as he struggles to dislodge her from the throne on which he had ensconced her in the deepest recesses of his psyche. She was a deeply religious woman, a frequenter of discourses given by various holy men, to which Pran accompanied her and which contributed significantly to the formation of his traditional Hindu

world view. In contrast to the mother, Pran's memories of his father, who died when he was eleven, are scant. They are also tinged with a regret that Pran did not get a chance to be closer to a figure who remains dim and was banished to the outskirts of family life when alive. He is clearly and irrevocably dead while the mother, who died ten years ago, is very much alive. The father was a man about town, rarely at home, and thoroughly disapproved of by the mother who not only considered herself more virtuous and intelligent, but also implied to the son that the stroke which finally killed the father was a consequence of his dissolute, 'manly' ways.

Pran's memories of his closeness to his mother, the hours they spent just sitting together, communing in silence, a feeling of deep repose flowing through him, are many. He remembers being breast-fed till he was eight or nine, although when he thinks about it a little more, he doubts whether there was any milk in the breasts for many of those years. In any event, he distinctly recollects peremptorily lifting up her blouse whenever he felt like a suck, even when she was busy talking to other women. Her visiting friends were at times indulgent and at others indignant, 'Why don't you stop him?' they would ask his mother. 'He does not listen,' she would reply in mock helplessness.

Pran slept in his mother's bed till he was eighteen. He vividly recalls the peculiar mixture of dread and excitement, especially during the adolescence years, when he would manoeuvre his erect penis near her vagina for that most elusive and forbidden of touches which he was never sure was a touch at all, where he never knew whether his penis had actually been in contact with her body. Later, his few physical encounters with women were limited to hugging, while he awkwardly contorted the lower part of his body to keep his erection beyond their ken. For a long time, his sexual fantasies were limited to looking at and touching a woman's breasts. As his analysis progressed, his most pleasurable sexual fantasy became one of the penis hovering on the brink of the labial lips, even briefly touching them, but never entering the woman's body.

After his studies, at which he was very good, Pran joined a newspaper and became quite successful. The time for his marriage had now arrived and there began the first open though still subdued conflicts with his mother on the choice of a marriage

partner. His mother invariably rejected every attractive woman he fancied, stating bluntly that sons forget their mothers if they get into the clutches of a beautiful woman. Pran finally agreed to his mother's choice of a highly educated, docile and plain looking woman. For the first six months, he felt no desire for his wife. (The fact that his mother slept in the room next to the bridal couple and insisted that the connecting door remain open at all times except for the hours of the night hardly worked as an aphrodisiac). When the family used the car, the wife would sit at the back, the mother not holding with new-fangled modern notions which would relegate her to the back seat once the son brought a wife home. Even now his sexual desire for his wife is perfunctory and occasional. He feels excited by women with short hair and who wear make-up and skirts rather than any long tressed Indian beauty in the traditional attire of *salwar kameez* or *sari*. Such a woman is too much like his mother. For many years, Pran has been trying to change his wife's conservative appearance, so reminiscent of the mother's, toward one which is closer to the object of his desire. His efforts are to little avail. The wife feels short hair, make-up and skirts will make her look like a prostitute. Pran would like to have the courage to say, 'Exactly!'

It was only after his mother's death that Pran experienced sexual intercourse with his wife as pleasurable. Yet after intercourse there is invariably a feeling of tiredness for a couple of days and Pran feels, as he puts it, that his body is 'breaking'. His need for food, especially the spicy-sour savories (*chat*) which were a special favorite of the mother and are popularly considered 'woman's food', goes up markedly. In spite of his tiredness, Pran can drive miles in search of the spicy fare.

The need for sleep, spicy food, together with the feeling of physical unease, also occurs at certain other times. It is a regular feature of his work day when, after a few hours of work, he feels the need for something to eat and a short nap. The physical unease, craving for food and sleep increases dramatically when he has to travel on business or to take people out for dinner. It is particularly marked if he ever has a drink at a bar with friends.

Relatively early in his analysis, Pran became aware of the underlying pattern in his behavior. Going to work, travelling, drinking and, of course, sexual intercourse, are 'manly' activities to which he is greatly drawn. They are, however, also experienced

as a separation from the mother which give rise to anxiety till he must come back to her, in food and sleep. He must recurrently merge with her in order, as he puts it, to strengthen his nervous system. The re-establishment of an oral connection with the mother is striking in its details. Pran not only hankers after the mother's favorite foods but feels a great increase in the sensitivity of the lips and the palate. The texture and taste of food in the mouth is vastly more important for the process of his recuperation than is the food's function in filling his belly. His sensual memories of his mother's breasts and the taste of her nipples in the mouth are utterly precise. He can recover the body of the early mother as a series of spaced flashes, as islands of memory. The short naps he takes after one of his 'manly' activities are framed in a special ritual. He lies down on his stomach with his face burrowed between two soft pillows, fantasizes about hugging a woman, then falls asleep and wakes up fresh and vigorous.

It took a longer time for Pran to become aware of the terror his mother's overwhelming invasiveness inspired in the little boy and his helpless rage in dealing with it. He railed, and continues to do so, at her selfishness which kept him bound to her and wept at memories of countless occasions when she would ridicule his efforts to break away from her to play with other boys or in the choice of his work place, clothes, or friends. She has destroyed his masculinity, he feels. As a boy, she made him wash her underclothes, squeeze out the discharge from her nipples, oil her hair and pluck out the grey ones on an almost daily basis. The birth of his two daughters, he felt, was due to this feminization which had made his semen 'weak'. He realized that all his 'manly' activities were not only in pursuit of individuation as a man, or even in a quest for pleasure but also because they would lacerate the mother. 'I always wanted to hurt her at the same time that I could not do without her. She has been raping me ever since I was born', he once said.

Often, as he lies there, abusing the mother, with a blissful expression on his face reflecting her close presence, I cannot help but feel that this is *nindastuti*, worship of a divinity through insult, denigration and contempt, which is one of the recognized relationships of a Hindu devotee with a divinity.

I have selected this particular vignette from my case histories because in its palette of stark, primary colors and in its lack of

complex forms and subtle shades, it highlights, even cartoons a dominant theme in the analysis of many male Hindu Indians. Judged by its frequency of occurrence in clinical work and in its pre-eminence in the Hindu cultural imagination, the theme of what I call maternal enthrallment and the issue of the boy's separation from the overwhelming maternal-feminine — rather than the dilemmas of Oedipus — appears to be the hegemonic (to use the fashionable Gramscian term) narrative of the Hindu family drama (Kakar 1989). It is the cornerstone in the architecture of the male self. The reason why I mention cultural imagination in conjunction with clinical work when advancing a generalized psychoanalytic proposition about the Indian cultural context is simple. Clinical psychoanalysis is generally limited to a small sample from three or four large Indian metropolises. It cannot adequately take into account the heterogeneity of a country of eight hundred million people with its regional, linguistic, religious and caste divisions. Clinical cases can, at best, generate hypotheses about cultural particularities. The further testing of these hypotheses is done (and remains true to psychoanalytic intention and enterprise) by testing them in the crucible of the culture's imagination — its myths, art, fiction, cinema and so on — before psychoanalytic propositions about another culture can be advanced.

The kind of maternal enthralment and the prolonged mother-son symbiosis I have described in this particular vignette, including the peek-a-boo, was-it-or-was-it-not incest, would ordinarily be associated with much greater pathology in analytic case conferences in Europe and North-America. Pran's level of functioning, however, is quite impressive in spite of his many inhibitions and anxieties, especially sexual. I wonder how much of this kind of psychoanalytical expectation that Pran is sicker than what I believe to be actually the case is due to a cultural contamination creeping into the clinical judgement of his sexual differentiation and separation-individuation processes. For instance, is the psychoanalytic evaluation of Pran's undoubted feminization and a certain lack of differentiation also being influenced by a Western cultural imagination of what it means to be, look, think, behave like a man or a woman? This becomes clearer if one thinks of Greek or Roman sculpture with their hard, muscled men's bodies and chests without any fat at all and compares it with the sculpted

representations of Hindu gods or the Buddha, where the bodies are softer, suppler and, in their hint of breasts, nearer to the female form.

I have no intention of relativizing Pran's pain and suffering out of existence. I only wish to point out that between a minimum of sexual differentiation needed to function heterosexually with a modicum of pleasure and a maximum which cuts off any sense of empathy and emotional contact with the other sex which is experienced as a different species altogether, there is a whole range of positions, each occupied by a culture which insists on calling it the only one that is mature and healthy.

Compared to a modal Western analysand, then (and one needs to postulate such a being if civilizational comparisons are to be made), the Hindu counterpart highlights different intra-psychic issues and places different accents on universal developmental experiences. Yet, perhaps because of an underlying similarity in the psychoanalytic clientele across cultures discussed earlier, cultural otherness does not breach the psychoanalytic framework made increasingly flexible by a profusion of models. Clinical work in India is thus not radically different from that in Europe and America. An analyst from outside the culture, encountering the strangeness of the cultural mask rather than the similarity of the individual face, may get carried away into exaggerating differences. However, if he could listen long enough and with a well tuned ear for the analysand's symbolic and linguistic universes, he would discover that individual voices speaking of the whirlings of imperious passion, the sharp stabbings of searing, burdensome guilt, the voracious hungers of the urge to merge, and the black despair at the absence of the Other, are as much evident as in psychoanalysis of Western patients.

Clinical work in another culture, however, does make us aware that because of the American and European domination of psychoanalytic discourse, Western cultural (and moral) imagination sometimes tends to slip into psychoanalytic theorizing as hidden 'health and maturity moralities', as Kohut (1979: 12) called them. Cultural judgements about psychological maturity, the nature of reality, 'positive' and 'negative' resolutions of conflicts and complexes often appear in the garb of psychoanalytic universals. Awareness of the cultural contexts of psychoanalysis would therefore contribute to increasing the ken and tolerance of our common

discipline for the range of human variations and a much greater circumspection in dealing with notions of pathology and deviance.

Summary

Based on clinical experience with Hindu patients in India, this paper tries to address the question of cross-cultural validity of psychoanalysis, namely whether psychoanalysis is possible with culturally traditional individuals in non-Western societies, and if so, whether there is a radical difference in the mental life of these patients. A core requirement for psychoanalysis, it is argued, is the presence of psychological modernity, an awareness at some level in the individual that to a large extent both emotional suffering and its healing have their sources in what may be called a mind, which is internal to the individual. Psychological modernity, the essence of individuation and individuality, is not limited to any particular historical period or geographic location but is also found in traditional non-Western civilizations such as the Hindu or the Buddhist. Psychoanalysis is therefore eminently possible with persons who do not share the modern Western version of psychological modernity but subscribe instead to their own traditional concept of individuation. This does not mean that there are no differences at all between, say, European and Hindu patients. We find the mental life of the latter often highlighting themes — such as the theme of 'maternal enthrallment' — which, because of its different salience (as compared, for example, to the oedipal motif) in Western cultural imagination, may tend to be too easily or too quickly pathologized in Western analytical discourse.

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Part Five

Psychoanalytic Approaches to Hindu Mysticism, Myth and Ritual

Part Five

Psychoanalytic Approaches to Hindu Mysticism, Myth and Ritual

10

Sex and Yoga: Psychoanalysis and the Indian Religious Experience*

J.M. Masson

I want to approach the subject of this paper in a more personal manner than is usual in such writings. Most Sanskritists have, like myself, concentrated their scholarly interests in India's ancient past and have spent most of their time reading the ancient Sanskrit texts. I suspect that this has sometimes produced a feeling of unease. By concentrating on the past, were we avoiding the present of India? Daniel H.H. Ingalls, in his article on 'The Study of the Past',[1] put the matter well when he said that we could become interested in Ancient India, but it was only possible to 'love' what we knew more personally in India's present. Psychoanalysis is a historical science that illuminates the present precisely by concerning itself with the past.

I can remember a summer in the hill station of Mahabaleshwar, where I spent eight hours a day reading the *Dhvanyāloka* and the *Nātyaśāstra* with a Pandit. Later in the evening I would put my reading aside and would go for a long walk, at dusk, in the streets of Mahabaleshwar. I remember one evening in particular, when I saw walking towards me a man dressed like a tiger, painted with black and yellow stripes, carrying a sword with a young boy alongside him. Shopkeepers rushed out of their shops to give

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him money. I wondered who the man was, why he was dressed that way, and why people gave him money. I reflected on my text, and yet had no answer. Nor could I find one from anyone else who saw him: the answer I received to my question was: 'He is a man dressed up as a tiger and many people are giving him money.' I felt as exasperated and as ignorant as E.M. Forster in *The Hill of Devi* who was always told that 'flowers were flowers' and 'trees were trees'. And the more I walked around the city, the more teeming life I encountered, the more things I found myself unable to understand. I spent my time trying to understand a world long gone by, when all around me were things totally impervious to my comprehension. I suspected that even if I did have access to the 'meaning' of these events I witnessed, that is, even if I did learn what the history of these happenings were, where they came from, what overt meaning they held for the people of the town, in short, even if I did become a well informed anthropologist, something would still escape me.

The history, the etiology and the complete description of these events was not all I was looking for. I wanted some deeper explanation that would have the power to satisfy some more diffuse craving in me to really know what something meant. Apart from family tradition, or training, or apparent vocation, what really made this particular man wear the clothes of a tiger and wander the streets of a city like Mahabaleshwar? Or for that matter, what made the Indian ascetics like the one I saw wear a loin cloth and wander off into the forests, both now and in ancient India? In ancient or mediaeval or modern India, I found that the same curiosity worked away at me. I really wanted to know in some depth what motivated the stories I read, the people I saw, what led them, when all else had been considered, to do the things they did. You may agree that psychoanalysis has much to say to the sociologist and the anthropologist and you will point out that many anthropologists, especially those of ten or fifteen years back, Kluckhohn, Cora du Bois, Bateson, Margaret Mead, etc.,[2] all took an active and intelligent interest in the progress of psychoanalysis. And historians continue to occupy themselves with traditional psychoanalytic questions, as borne out by the work on Hitler,[3] the Langer studies,[4] the biography of Colonel House,[5] the work on Chambers and Hiss,[6] etc. And as for literary criticism, the amount of work has always been and remains quite

large and impressive.[7] All this we agree with. But Sanskrit, you will say, surely here is an area that can profit, if at all, only in the most minor way from the insights gained by psychoanalysis.

Well, it is the purpose of the present paper to try to argue that this is not so. I realize that it is difficult to convince the reader rather than simply assure him that it is so; that I have myself experienced it to be so. I should have to take up a single puzzling feature from a Sanskrit text, and try to show how an analytic attitude might help us to solve what have been traditionally puzzling features. This is what I tried to do in my paper, 'Fratricide Among the Monkeys'. I tried to show — with what success I cannot yet judge until the paper is published and others can then search for more simple solutions — that the strange episode concerning the origins of the fraternal hatred that Vālin and Sugrīva shared for one another can be paralleled by situations that psychoanalysts will see every day in their practice. If I am correct, then the reason that commentators on the *Rāmāyaṇa*, and the entire Sanskrit tradition, have felt somewhat uneasy about the death of Vālin at Rāma's hands is because they recognized, beneath the surface of the words of the story, that Rāma was taken in, he showed too little psychological understanding, and adjudged Sugrīva to be the virtuous king, whereas in fact a close and sceptical reading of the text reveals that it was really Vālin who perceived the murderous, if not consciously so, intention of his brother, and hence banished him from the kingdom. But here I may make a confession that may not please psychoanalysts: I am not totally convinced that psychoanalytic understanding will always help to reveal such ambiguities. I never felt totally comfortable with two of Freud's books: *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* and *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious*. Both works postulate that parapraxes, especially linguistic slips, will inevitably reveal deeper underlying feelings. True, such 'mistakes' carry meaning, and often they can lead to greater depths of understanding. But I do not think it is the 'slips' of a Sanskrit text, or the symbols they contain, that will lead us into a fuller understanding of their deeper significance. Rather I think it is a much more diffuse help that one can expect from psychoanalysis. It is the basic psychoanalytic attitude which will, I feel, be of most benefit to Sanskrit scholars. Freud spoke of it, in very unusual terms, and in a much more profound way than I ever

could, in a letter to the Reverend Pfister, a Swiss pastor-analyst with whom, in spite of basic disagreements over religious matters, Freud remained on very good terms. Let me read you the relevant passage — I think it is magnificent:

> Your analysis suffers from the hereditary weakness of virtue. It is the work of an overdecent man who feels himself obliged to be discreet . . . discretion is incompatible with . . . psychoanalysis. One has to become a bad fellow, transcend the rules, sacrifice oneself, betray, and behave like the artist who buys paints with his wife's household money, or burns the furniture to warm the room for his model. Without some such criminality there is no real achievement.[8]

What then is this psychoanalytic attitude that I speak of? It resists the attempt to see everything in terms of others. Thus it is that when Freud was asked whether a man could be held responsible for his dreams, he replied: 'Whom else would you hold responsible?' Psychoanalysis is, in my view, always sceptical of anagogic or 'spiritual' explanations, or of explanations in terms of what we cannot understand. It is also persistent in its search for truth, pressing on when most people would rather say, 'let's just forget it'. 'Well yes', they may say, 'there *is* an element of homosexuality in the nineteenth century sage Ramakrishna, but why bring this up, why not just regard it as personal to him and forget it?' I am reminded of the manner in which Freud responded to Jung, as early as 1909, when Jung said that he had received a much more enthusiastic response to psychoanalysis in the United States by simply omitting the distasteful doctrines about the importance of infantile sexuality. Yes, drily replied Freud, and the response would have been even more enthusiastic had you left out the unconscious, repression, resistance. . . .

The title of this paper, Sex, Yoga and the Indian Religious Experience, in some profound sense, just about covers the whole of the Sanskrit tradition. If by sex we include the entire range of literature devoted to love, not only the Kāmaṣāstra tradition, but the hundreds of plays from Bhāsa, Kālidāsa and Bhavabhūti down to the present day which have romantic and sensual love as their theme, then we also touch upon the whole tradition of *Alaṅkāra śāstra* and its further ramifications. If by Yoga we mean the tradition of asceticism and philosophical speculation begun in the earliest *Upaniṣads*, down through the philosophical portions of

the *Mahābhārata*, the *Brahmasūtras* and its great commentary tradition, right up to the medieval encyclopaedic works such as the *Yogavāsiṣṭhamahārāmāyaṇa*, then we include almost every great religious/philosophical and speculative work of ancient India. The Indian religious experience is the attitude taken towards these works, an attitude of contemplation and emotional involvement with them. Furthermore, there is something very peculiar, and not only to the Indian tradition, which I realized as I thought about all these texts from two such seemingly different traditions: that there was hardly a work of Indian origin, which did not, in some degree, combine the two basic attitudes, sensuality and mysticism or asceticism. Just think of any of the great mythic representatives of one or the other attitude: Śiva the great ascetic. His wife Pārvatī, the great beauty. Their protracted love-making in the Himālayas goes on for one thousand years. Viṣṇu and his great power of Māya, the power to delude. And then his further history as Kṛṣṇa, the narcissistic infant, the eternal adolescent, the great lover. Never mind mythical figures, think of the mythology that grows around even a historical philosopher such as Śaṅkarācārya: does not the commentary on the beautiful love poem, the *Amaruśataka*, tell us that Śaṅkara is responsible for its authorship, when he practiced *parakāyapraveśa*, entry into another body, to taste the joys of sexuality in the body of a young dying prince? Is not the great Abhinavagupta, so austere that he committed suicide by entering a cave in Kashmir with 1200 disciples, depicted in orthodox texts, as sitting in a vineyard, surrounded by beautiful women disciples, fruit in his hand, wine on his lips, the Sanskrit texts on his lap?[9] The Tantric texts, both early and late, make this collocation explicit in such peculiar ways that they provide a field-day for the psychologically minded. Think too of the preoccupation with temptation in almost every Indian religious text. Surely this is an area of experience in which the insights derived from psychoanalysis can benefit us greatly. For psychoanalysis has taught us to be aware of derivatives, distorted, hidden eruptions of drives banished into the unconscious. Psychoanalysis teaches us much about how the repressed returns — how it can be recognized even in its most disguised forms. Again I am not referring to the slips we make in everyday life, but of much larger constellations revealing agitation beneath the surface. For example, the preoccupation of writers is a fine tap-root leading far

down into the dark shaft of their unconscious. Why was Rilke preoccupied with puppets? Or Hemingway with big powerful guns? Or Vālmīki with loss or love? And from there, it is hard to resist asking more generally, why is Sanskrit culture so preoccupied with illusion and delusion (*māyā*, *moha*); with a sense of things passing away (*kṣaṇikatvam* — or *te hi no divasāḥ gatah*); with worldweariness (*vairāgya*), with the nature of death and of saving phantasies (*manorājya*).

In thinking about the very name of yoga, *haṭha-yoga*, we can discern the notion of violence. Violence to the body and hence control, through the inner body and its organs, of the outer world. When this fails, as it must inevitably do, hallucination and states bordering on psychoses are likely to develop. When such delusional states are not only ego-syntonic, but acceptable to the culture as well, we find ourselves with much larger problems that bring into focus the whole motion of the psychodynamics of an entire culture. It is true that people are most attracted by what is successfully sublimated. This is equally valid for India, for we find the culture respects Kālidāsa more than some of the obscure authors of the Tantras. But there is also an attraction that depends on the contrary — the raw, naked display of what are usually unconscious fantasies: preoccupation with bowels, with faeces, with semen, with menstrual blood. It seems that people run away from certain things only to be able to come closer to them, but unobserved. Hence yoga is unhappy with the body, and at the same time all Yogins are obsessed with the body and its products. The same mechanism takes place in the sphere of sexuality: if it is discussed only within certain contexts, one's preoccupation is denied. So we find that the lefthanded Tantrics have various ceremonies that involve sexual intercourse (most often with non-mother figures, e.g., washerwomen), but that the sexual content of such activities can be consciously denied because of the fact that they take place *in a ritual context*. Modern Indian mystics rarely speak directly of sexuality, and yet I would hazard the guess that there is not a single one whose life and writings do not clearly reveal the derivatives of displaced sexuality (one has only to think of Ramakrishna and his transvestite activities, or of Aurobindo and his 'Mother').

Again I come back to an earlier point: we need and demand, we hunger for, an explanation of those things in India that most

fascinate us. Who is this strange God, Gaṇeśa, ubiquitous throughout Maharasthra as a flat orange stone, with two sparkling eyes? And who is this attractive, charming monkey god, Hanuman? What is the source of his fascination for everyone, villager and scholar alike? And what about the text in which Hanumān is embedded, the *Rāmāyaṇa*? One needs a critical text, granted. But we have it (though some may justifiably dispute this). We need more knowledge of the culture of the period. We need to know more of the history of the text, and of the history of its travels and transmutations, first throughout India, then throughout South-east Asia. And we especially want to understand the nature of its appeal to so many people in so many different parts of India, Thailand and even China. I grant you that these are questions we cannot ignore — they are basic to any research. But alongside them there seem to be even more basic questions that press equally for an answer: why is Rāma considered the ideal king, and Lakṣmana the ideal brother, and Sītā the ideal wife, and Hanumān the ideal Bhakta? What needs do such figures answer? How can we understand the many strange episodes in the narrative? Why, really, was Śūrpaṇakhā defaced? Why, really, did Rāma abandon Sītā, to confuse and embarrass and even disgust the later tradition? Can the answers to these questions only touch the surface? If a friend leaves his wife and we are puzzled, is it not a legitimate activity to wonder about it, to review what we know of their lives in order to help satisfy a basic curiosity?

Of course, by now you know what I am driving at: I am asking you to recognize that these are all questions that psychoanalysis has traditionally concerned itself with: the inner life of people. Let me tell you a very abbreviated case history that I read in an article of Phyllis Greenacre,[10] and which made a profound impression on me: a patient consistently recounted an episode from his adult years which deeply affected him: late at night there was a knock on his front door. When he went to open the door, a burglar leapt into the house. It was traumatic for him, but years later, when he remembered it, he found himself seeing, very clearly, the shining door-knob on his front door. Elaborate analytic work finally revealed that his door-knob was only a phantom from a much earlier and much more profoundly revealing experience: as a child he had looked through the key-hole into his parent's bedroom to watch them having intercourse. The shining

door-knob from later years replaced this earlier and more highly charged door-knob from his childhood. It is an impressive fragment from an analysis, and frankly I doubt whether it will be possible for psychoanalysis to reveal anything quite so revealing about an ancient Sanskrit text. But on the other hand, when we think about what underlies this psychoanalytic observation, we can, I believe, learn something that will be of use in our Sanskrit research. For the theoretical underpinning of this episode is a phenomenon first discovered and described by Freud, as early as 1899:[11] that of screen-memories. The concept has a great and unlimited explanatory power, and helps not only the psychoanalyst, but the literary critic and the historian of culture as well. As Fenichel puts it: 'In discussing the defence mechanism of denial, the psychology of screen memories became clear: a person who tries to repress a memory is seeking associately connected substitute scenes which he may offer his memory.'[12] Fenichel later (1945: 529) shows how screen experiences can be constructed through the phantasies and games of children: 'Just as *this* is only a fantasy, *that* (occurrence) was not true.' If we allow ourselves to think about this, both in relation to our own lives and in relation to what we read in a Sanskrit text, we can begin to see its many useful areas of application, and also how easily it extends itself into other areas of experience. Freud already showed the connection between screen memories and *déjà-vu* experiences. I feel that this is an area not so far removed from states of depersonalization and derealization, a phenomenon we encounter very often in description of Indian religious experiences.[13] We should approach this and other allied phenomena, such as hypnagogic states[14] with the recognition that they are after all universal, if somewhat pathological, experiences, common to the *Yogavāsiṣṭha*, to state hospital patients in psychotic states, to modern poets, and to ordinary people. Such states seem to be of fascination to many people, not only to ancient Indians. Even psychoanalysts from the Freudian school have fallen prey to the mystery of the state of altered consciousness: David Rapaport was interested in automatic writing, Silberer[15] first spoke in detail of the strange state just before falling asleep (no mystery to those aware of the early Sanskrit writings on dreaming and sleep). The early work of Freud on hypnosis derived from a tradition not far from this early Indian concern for magical states, and Freud

retained, for quite some time, an interest in telepathy and other forms of parapsychology[16] at the same time as he felt repulsed and estranged from his own interest. I think a worthwhile endeavour would be to collect references to states of deep meditation, and examine what is mentioned, haphazardly as it were, in connection with them. What are the details surrounding the descriptions? For Abhinavagupta[17] a trance state was a time of destruction. Towards the end of his *Tantrāloka* he speaks of razing the world of dreams and illusions through the fire that he has become, Śiva's fire.[18] The stories contained in the *Yoga-vāsiṣṭha* offer a mine of such detail. Needless to say, nobody has looked at this strange work from anything even approaching a psychological point of view. I feel that such states, whether in ancient India, or in modern America, must be explained, and I regard the refusal to do so as a scientific regression. Thus I have never been happy with the explanation of some psychoanalysts, that certain children have a 'predisposition' to schizophrenia, say, rather than to search the family constellation thoroughly. This is Margaret Mahler's view,[19] and much as I admire her work on childhood psychosis, I regard this kind of explanation as a refusal to search for causes. Similarly, Heinz Kohut's explanation of 'cosmic narcissism'[20] (he sees them as similar to 'oceanic experiences', mentioned, sceptically, by Freud in *Civilisation and Its Discontents*) I see not as explanations, but as a refusal to apply the tools of analysis. I cannot help viewing asceticism (like childhood psychosis) as a defense, not a freely chosen position.[21] Such reaction-formations seem to me ubiquitous in Sanskrit texts, and searching them out and identifying them for what they are, strikes me as a valuable enterprise.

It is probably clear from what I have said so far, and from the overabundance of brief examples, that I regard psychoanalysis as a unique tool for allowing some relief from what I called, earlier, the unease some feel over devoting themselves so exclusively to a vanished past. For it is impossible, when one deals with this psychoanalytically, to ignore its modern derivatives: psychoanalysis as the historical science forces us to make the constant shift from the old and the past to the present and the active. What we see in an ancient Indian ascetic is not so very different from what we can observe in our own lives, if we have the patience and the internal courage to seek for it. If we do not, then we can turn

to the society around us, and find expression for these derivatives there. How else can we explain to ourselves the current obsession with meditation? To some it seems self-evidently true. To some it seems silly. To the analyst, it is neither: it is an expression of something much deeper, and it requires to be understood. The same is true of the interest in health foods. Here too is an area that extends back into India's past: hardly an early text exists that does not have something quite revealing to say about diet and its relation to the sexual life. The bridge is there and of course extends to each one of us, for he is a rare man who does not have his own private food fads that have their origin far back in his own past, and which have accreted to them the most far-reaching and disparate symbolic connotations. Or can we ignore the fact that so many Yoga centres find themselves next door to the increasingly popular interest in Karate? Can we dismiss this seemingly accidental co-location of contemplation and violence? Again psychoanalysis has much to say on the subject.

Some critics have been taken aback, not at the fact of my psychoanalytic interests, but what they consider to be its one-sideness. What they mean is that I talk of applying to the Indian tradition only one rather narrow psychology, that of Freud, and I omit many others. Many of my readers, interested in other, more modern, less traditional psychological systems, must feel the same way. But my experience in reading these other theories, those of the neo-Freudians in particular, Sullivan, Horney, Fromm, and those of Laing, Cooper, etc., has been that they do not seem in any meaningful way applicable to the one tradition I know well, the Sanskrit literature of ancient India. They appear irrelevant. For example, in spite of the fact that Jung concerns himself so often with India, while Freud, alas, never mentions the tradition, I find that what Jung says strikes me as strange, as somehow profoundly alien from what I know of the Indian tradition — on the surface, and at most an exercise in blindness. I quote a sentence he wrote on Ceylon, in his posthumously published book, *Memories, Dreams, Reflection* (p. 264): 'Ceylon — there is a touch of paradise, in which one cannot linger too long' which is most unfortunate for those millions of people, leading lives of psychological complexity on the island of Ceylon. Freud, on the other hand, seemed to answer so much, or if not to answer, at least to point in the direction of knowledge. What

he said is embedded in a tradition of scepticism, of an awareness of the limits of human knowledge ('Before the mystery of the creative artist, analysis must lay down its arms', he said) and yet it speaks with a profound intellectual integrity, a deep honesty, refusing to pretend, to deny, to simplify. I am reminded of something I read once in the Pali canon. How the Buddha told his disciples that he did not have the *ācāryamuṣṭi*, the closed fist of the teacher. He did not hold certain truths back for certain chosen disciples, but gave of his knowledge, of everything he knew, freely, to whosoever asked. He had no secrets, knew nothing divine. Freud, I feel is like that. So too is the modesty of the Freudian analyst today: he does not, unlike Jung, promise something beautiful and spiritual to his patients, something he is reserving for the end of the treatment. He has no magic wand, no secret knowledge. He will give what he has, only his understanding, and that will come only with the freely given help of the patient. He has nothing hidden, he has only his intense curiosity to know the truth. And the patient, somewhere buried in him, has this truth.

The entire therapeutic structure is based on the recognition, since Freud, that mental health, and hence human happiness, consists in an internal freedom and autonomy as opposed to compulsion and coercion. But beyond this very fundamental recognition, there has been little written in the psychoanalytic literature in elaboration of this point. Apart from a few brief articles by Ernest Jones,[22] Kubie[23] and one or two others,[24] there is almost nothing to read. [The psychiatric literature is worse. Roy Grinker, for example,[25] suggests that a good prognosis for mental health is to be found in the adolescent in the mid-west who is at a small and mediocre university in order to become, eventually, a YMCA secretary, and whose marital ambition is to find a wife who bears a remarkable similarity to his own mother.]

On the other hand, ancient societies in general seem to have been more articulate on this topic. The ancient Chinese have an elaborate and sophisticated version of the healthy or free man. Here is a poem by the T'ang poet Han Shan:

> Among a thousand clouds and ten thousand streams,
> Here lives an idle man,
> In the daytime wandering over green mountains,

At night coming home to sleep by the cliff.
Swiftly the springs and autumns pass,
But my mind is at peace, free from dust or delusion.
How pleasant, to know I need nothing to lean on,
to be still as the waters of the autumn river.[26]

And even the Persian tradition concerns itself much with the personalities of its Sufi saints (contrasting obsession with freedom; see *La Passion d' Al-Hallaj* by Massignon). Within the Indian tradition, I am reminded of the lovely story of Yājñavalkya in the *Bṛhradāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*: Janaka called together all the Brahmin sages in his kingdom, tied sacks of gold to the horns of ten thousand cows, then announced to the *ṛsis* present that the wisest amongst them could drive away the cows. None dared, until Yājñavalkya told his pupil to drive them to his house. 'Are you then the wisest among us, O Yājñavalkya', asked the Brahmins, 'No', calmly replied Yājñavalkya, 'I merely wanted the cows'.

Less available, but perhaps more profound is the story of Tulādhāra in the *Mahābhārata*: so holy was a certain sage that he sat immobile in the forest for one whole year. Birds nested in his hair, and he did not move a muscle until the baby birds had hatched, grown up, and flew away from the nest. When he moved he thought to himself: there is none so holy as me. 'Oh yes', said a disembodied voice, 'there is one far more holy than you; his name is Tulādhāra'. 'Where can I find him?' asked the proud ascetic. 'Search'. One day, tired in his travels, he stops on the outskirts of the city of Benaras, in a small spice shop, one of many thousands that dot the entrance to the holy city. The owner sells honey, cloves, cinnamon and other household spices. Looking into the sage's eyes, the owner suddenly tells him: 'I am Tulā-dhāra, so called because my scales are always equally balanced. I charge no more to the wealthy merchant than I do to the poor maid.' The sage was thunderstruck, that here in this ordinary *Pāṇ* shop was to be found the one man in India wiser than he was. He plied him with questions. Tulādhāra could tell him only very little: he knew but one rule, that he should not deliberately harm any man, and this he tried to do as best he could. Apart from that he lived a simple, ordinary life, with a wife and children and a small honest business.

What can we deduce from this story, peculiarly vivid in its narration, stuck by accident as it were into the great epic of

pre-Christian India? Each person will probably have his own interpretation. My own goes something like this: happiness consists in leading an ordinary life based on the premise of taking enough ordinary enjoyments for oneself, that one is not burdened with an unconsciously active sadism that expresses itself in extreme piety or even gets turned back against oneself, and becomes expressed in sadistically tinged asceticism with a consequent disinterest or a moral and spiritual snobbery towards other people (such as the sage's before his encounter with Tulādhāra). A beautiful verse comes to mind,

tyaja dharmam adharmaṃ ca
tyaja satyam asatyaṃ vā
satyāsatye ubhe tyaktvā
yena tyajasi tat tyaja

'Give up right and wrong. Truth and falsity. And when you have given all this up, give up that through which you gave it all up.'

I will not presume to analyse these fine and profound lines.

Notes

1. Daniel H.H. Ingalls, 'On the Study of the Past', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 80, 1960, pp. 191–7.
2. For an excellent bibliographical account, along with many valuable insights, see Clyde Kluckhohn, 'The Influence of Psychiatry on Anthropology in America during the Last 100 Years', in J.K. Hal *et al.* (eds) *100 Years of American Psychiatry* (Columbia University Press, 1944) pp. 589–618.
3. Walter C. Langer, *The Mind of Adolf Hitler: The Secret Wartime Report* (New York: Basic Books, 1972).
4. W.L. Langer, 'The Next Assignment', *American Historical Review*, 63, 1958, pp. 283–304. Also, 'Some Correlates of Beliefs on the Malevolence and Benevolence of Supernatural Beings: A Cross-Cultural Study', *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 58, 1958, pp. 161–9.
5. See Alexander L. George and Juliette L. George, *Woodrow Wilson and Colonel House* (New York: The John Day Co., 1956). See also the review of Bernard Brodie, 'A Psychoanalytic Interpretation of Woodrow Wilson', in Bruce Mazlish, Grosset and Dunlap (eds) *Psychoanalysis and History* (New York: 1963).

6. See Meyer Z. Zeligs, *Friendship and Fratricide: An Analysis of Whittaker Chambers and Alger Hiss* (New York: The Viking Press, 1967).
7. The journal *Psychology and Literature* is a good example of the kind of work being done. See also Leon Edel, 'Notes on the Use of Psychological Tools in Literary Scholarship', *Psychology and Literature*, 1.4, September, 1951, p. 3. Collections include: E. Manheim, *Hidden Patterns: Studies in Psychological Literary Criticism* (New York: Macmillan, 1966); Frederick C. Crews (ed.), *Psychoanalysis and Literary Process* (Cambridge: Winthrop Publishers, Inc., 1970); Norman N. Holland: *Psychoanalysis and Shakespeare* (New York: 1966).
8. Quoted in the Introduction by Philip Rieff to Freud, *History of the Psychoanalytic Movement* (New York: Collier Books, 1967).
9. The text is edited by K.C. Pandey in *Abhinavagupta: An Historical and Philosophical Study* (Banaras: Chowkhambha Sanskrit Studies, [2nd edition revised], 1966).
10. In 'A Contribution to the Study of Screen Memories', in *Trauma, Growth and Personality* (New York: Norton, 1952) pp. 188–203. See also: N. Reider, 'Reconstruction and Screen Function', *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Society*, 1, 1953, pp. 389–405.
11. S. Freud, 'Screen Memories', *Standard Edition*, 3, 1899, pp. 301–22.
12. Otto Fenichel, *The Psychoanalytic Theory of Neurosis* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1945).
13. They are described in almost every Indian text. But one of the most unusually vivid is to be found in Lilian Silburn, *Le Vijñāna Bhairava* [annotated translation of an early Kashmir Śaivite text], *Publications de l'Institut de Civilization Indienne*, 15, Paris, 1961. For the psychoanalytic material, see J. Arlow, 'The Structure of the déjà vu Experience', *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, 7, 1959, pp. 611–31.
14. See Merton M. Gill and M. Brenman, *Hypnosis and Related States* (New York: International Universities Press, 1959).
15. See D. Rapaport, *Organization and Pathology and Thought* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1951). See in particular: H. Silberer (1909): 'Report on a Method of Eliciting and Observing Certain Symbolic Hallucination-Phenomena', pp. 195–207.

16. For interest if not for reliability, I recommend Nandor Fodor, *Freud, Jung, and Occultism* (New York: University Books, 1971).
17. See J.J. Masson and M.V. Patwardhan, *Śāntarasa and Abhinavagupta's Philosophy of Aesthetics* (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1969).
18. See the end of the *Īśvarapratybhaijñā Vivṛtivimarśinī* of Abhinavagupta, Pandit Madhusudan Kaul Shastri (ed.) (Bombay: Nirnaya Sagar Press, 1943 [Kashmir Series of Texts and Studies, no. 65]).
19. Margaret S. Mahler, *On Human Symbiosis and the Vicissitudes of Individuation* (New York: International Universities Press, 1968).
20. See his 'Forms and Transformations of Narcissism', *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, 14, 1966, pp. 243–72.
21. Anna Freud, *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defence*, C. Baines (trans.) (New York: International Universities Press, 1936 [revised edition, 1966]).
22. Ernest Jones, 'The Concept of a Normal Mind', in *Papers on Psychoanalysis*, Baillere (London: Tindall and Cox, 1948) pp. 201–16.
23. Lawrence S. Kubie, 'The Fundamental Nature of the Distinction Between Health and Neurosis', *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, 23, 1951, pp. 167–204.
24. See, for example, M. Jahoda, *Current Concepts of Positive Mental Health* (New York: Basic Books, 1968) for a review of the literature.
25. Roy Grinker Sr., Roy Grinker Jr. and J. Timberlake, '"Mentally Healthy" Young Males-(Homoclites)', *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 6, 1962, pp. 435–53.
26. From: *Cold Mountain*, 100 Poems by the T'ang poet, Han Shan (trans. and with an introduction by Burton Watson) (London: Jonathan Cape, 1970).

11

Karma, Guilt, and Buried Memories: Public Fantasy and Private Reality in Traditional India

Robert P. Goldman

Myself when young did eagerly frequent
Doctor and Saint, and heard great Argument
About it and about: but evermore
Came out by the same Door as in I went.

Rubaiyat of Omar Khayam
Tr. Edward Fitzgerald

The greater part of contemporary scholarship on the subject of *karma* in traditional India has tended to focus on cataloguing the views of various schools or on the elaborate presentation of the positions of particular schools or texts. Little attention has been given to the question of the fundamental significance of the concepts of *karma* and past lives and their role in Indian culture and society. The present paper proposes to examine the belief in *karma* from the point of view of its psychological function.

Rather than deal further with the technical or śāstraic expositions of *karma*, the paper suggests that the question of *karma* is intimately connected with and significantly illuminated by the traditional and widely pervasive literary and popular notion of the curse.

1. The study of the continuum of metaphysical and pseudo-scientific concepts that western scholars subsume under the term *karma* continues to be one of the most absorbing of those yet undertaken by indologists. There exists a very sizable bibliography of serious and not-so-serious articles and books on this subject (if indeed it is one subject), and hardly does a meeting of a scholarly society concerned with Asian Humanities or Comparative Religions not have at least a few papers and often a whole panel devoted to *karma*. The power of this concept to stimulate learned inquiry and debate is most graphically illustrated by the convening of a series of 'karma conferences' held in the middle and late seventies under the auspices of the American Council of Learned Societies and the Social Science Research Council. These conferences, in which more than thirty scholars participated, resulted in the publication, in 1980, of a substantial volume, *Karma and Rebirth in Classical Indian Traditions* (henceforth KR) edited by Wendy O'Flaherty and published by the University of California Press. I understand that a second volume is forthcoming.

This enormous interest in the study of *karma* on the part of students of India is easily understood. It is, in the first instance, a subject that virtually obsesses the authors of traditional Indian religious, philosophical, legal, medical, and even literary texts, and however these authors or modern scholars may seek to define this slippery term, it is undeniably true that some notion of *karma* is fundamental to all schools of the three major indigenous religious traditions of India, Hinduism, Jainism, and Buddhism. Moreover, at least some general conception of the workings of this force has often been observed to underlie or condition the attitudes and actions of many Indians in their daily lives.

It is neither within the scope of this paper nor the interests of its author to deal, as has been so effectively done by the contributors to KR, in any detailed fashion with any of the specific formulations of the theories of *karma* as put forth by the various schools of Indian religion and philosophy. This has been done and done well, but although exposition of the specifics is essential to scholarship in the individual fields of study, it can, when it becomes the sole concern of scholarship, serve to obscure the subject behind a screen of minutia rather than, as one would hope, illuminate it.

Before proceeding with a discussion of the issues promised in the title of this essay, and, in the course of that discussion, some comments on the work represented in KR, it will be helpful to enunciate a simple, general, and, I hope, not entirely exceptionable statement of what *karma* in its broadest sense means. Such an undertaking is not without its pitfalls. For one thing it may be considered rash in the light of the fact that, as O'Flaherty puts it, the experts involved in the first *karma* conference spent much of their time 'in a lively but ultimately vain attempt to define what we mean by karma and rebirth', to naively hazard a broad definition. Surely only a fool would step in where so learned a body of angels tread with such trepidation. Moreover, as has been noted before, the Sanskrit term *karma* is highly polysemic, a condition accentuated by its having been adopted as a technical term in widely different senses by a great variety of systems and *śāstras*. Thus the term might suggest rather different things to, say, a vedic ritualist, a grammarian, and a Buddhist mendicant. Despite the semantic flexibility of the term *karma*, the difficulty of pinning it to one specific meaning or even group of meanings, investigation of the semantic range of the term is not unrewarding, and in fact, an interesting article on this problem by Edwin Gerow has recently appeared.[1] Gerow was a participant in the first *karma* conference mentioned by O'Flaherty, but his paper was evidently not selected for inclusion in the KR volume of its proceedings. Indeed to judge from Gerow's opening remark, 'At a recent conference on "karma and rebirth", I was widely suspected to have made a joke when I observed that the sense of "karma" most familiar to me was that of the grammatical "direct object": *īpsitatamaṁ karma*'.[2] His fellow participants did not, at least initially, take his ideas seriously. Surely Gerow's is not the *karma* that the learned participants had assembled to discuss, and one can almost hear the hearty academic chuckles subsiding before his earnestness and rising irritation. 'Grammar', as Gerow ironically observes, 'deals with mere "words"; it cannot capture the *seriousness* of the *kosmos*'.[3] Gerow's article is, despite its occasional preciousness and unproductive deference to traditionalist views, a useful and even provocative exposition of the implications of the Sanskrit grammarians' views on action and process as fundamental not only to language but to the study of other, perhaps larger, philosophical issues.

I would recommend Gerow's paper to the consideration of all scholars interested in the question of *karma*, even participants in *karma* workshops and conferences. I do so not because the piece provides us with a new definition of *karma* as a cosmic or ethical force, but rather because it exhorts us to a careful evaluation of the fundamental meaning of this term that on some level must inform the thinking of learned Indian authors of whatever school when they formulate their expositions and theories of *karma*.

For the fact is that although the contributors to KR seem to have had some difficulty in arriving at their 'general consensus that we were dealing with a theory of rebirth based on the moral quality of previous lives',[4] their laughter at Gerow's 'joke' suggests that, in fact, this consensus was implicit to their undertaking.

2. For all the wranglings and sophisticated 'models' brought to bear on the problem, the *karma* conferees seem to have come away from their meetings with the same notion of *karma* that they started with, much the same notion, after all, held by the generality of westerners familiar with the term and for that matter most Indians. Broadly stated, and a broad statement will be entirely adequate to my purpose in this paper, the term *karma* denotes a system of beliefs that see the physical, social, and moral condition of an individual as the result of actions performed by that individual in the past, especially but not exclusively in a more or less chronologically distant past life. This process is, barring eschatological intervention, continuous so that it is generally projected into the indefinite future.

Now even leaving out the many sectarian and scholastic variations in the theory of how this process functions and how we are to conceptualize the nature of the agent/object of karmically significant actions, it is clear that the fundamental notion of *karma* is a complex one resting on two principal beliefs, related but separate. One of these is the belief in transmigration of the animating principle, however defined, from one more or less physical, terrestrial body to another.[5] A second fundamental belief is that all actions have at least the potential for future consequences quite different from those intended by their agents and that the ultimate results of action rebound onto the agent himself. A corollary to this last belief is one that holds that actions belong to some absolute hierarchically ordered continuum that has an

unvarying correspondence in the ordered continuum of results as perceived in the differing quality of living beings' material, social, and moral conditions.

Now when the two principal beliefs underlying the theory of *karma* are thus isolated two things become clear: neither belief is dependent upon the other and neither is peculiar to India. In fact one or another of these beliefs is to be found as the fundamental metaphysic of most known religions.

The belief in transmigration of the soul or animating principle from one terrestrial body to another, although alien to the Judeo-Christian-Islamic world, is by no means restricted to the religious systems originating in India. It is known to have been held in the ancient classical world and has been found in tribal cultures in many parts of the world. Indeed if we eliminate the term 'terrestrial' and limit the number of possible rebirths to one, we see that the principle of rebirth is, after all, equally fundamental to the great religions originating in the Near East.

Similarly the notion that one's condition in the life to come, whether that life is on earth or in another world, is dependent on the quality of one's actions in the present life, is the very cornerstone of virtually every successful religious tradition the world has known. What is characteristically Indian about the *karma* doctrine, then, is not to be found in the existence of either of these beliefs but rather in the conjoining of them so closely and in an unusually elaborate concern with referring even the most minute details of a person's life to his actions in a previous existence.

It would appear then, that the beliefs underlying the doctrine of *karma*, viz., that some spirit survives the death of the body and that some metaphysical mechanism insures that we reap what we sow, are — far from being uniquely Indian — in reality virtually universals of human culture. This is perhaps an obvious thing to state; yet it is often overlooked by those who would see India's cultural phenomena as unique or somehow fundamentally different from those of the West; a view that invariably conceals more than it reveals. The importance of this seeming commonplace is that it enables us, as the KR essays with their emphasis on metaphysical and philosophical texts do not, to see *karma* as a human phenomenon, and its systematization as an expression of a genuine and universal human need.

3. When we come to consider a belief or set of beliefs that is widely held by the people of one time, one tradition, or one area, we must, if we are to understand that belief and perhaps learn something about the people who entertain it, first give some thought to the validity, the truth-value of the belief in question. If such reflection leads us to the conclusion that the belief does indeed correspond to some objective and verifiable reality, say that the proper application of fertilizer increases crop yields, we cease to regard it as a belief and lose interest in the fact that people hold it. Subsequent scholarly or scientific discussion or conferences on the matter would concern themselves with the phenomenon of plant fertilization itself. But this simple distinction between the study of a phenomenon and an inquiry into the belief in a hypothesis that is not, in the end, subject to any meaningful verification, is rarely if ever addressed by *karma* researchers and is avoided by both the editor and the contributors in KR. To read some of the ponderous discourses on *how karma* works is to be left in some confusion as to the nature of the scientific stance of their authors and the level of their scholarly distance, a confusion that is only intensified when O'Flaherty coyly remarks of the *karma* conference participants, 'For we too are actors, and how can we tell the dancers from the dance?'[6] This is not to say that KR is not a useful contribution. It does set out for the scholar of Indian thought a handy reference guide to the detailed formulations of the theories of *karma* put forward in or extrapolated from a variety of textual schools. Only a few of the papers, such as the interesting essays of Hart and Obeyesekere, go beyond the level of mere catalogue to offer new hypotheses on the intellectual history of India. None of the KR authors, however, makes any serious attempt to deal with the fundamental question of what the virtually universal Indian belief in the all but inescapable force of actions supposedly performed in previous lives can possibly mean.

Despite the coyness of the pose taken by the editor of KR, it does not appear likely to me that she or for that matter most of the contributors seriously believes in the existence of anything like the metaphysical force most Indians think of in connection with the term *karma*. I say this because the contributors are scholars whose work depends on the acceptance of ideas only when presented with clear evidence. The evidence for the reality

of transmigration that I have so far seen is entirely of the pathetic, unscientific, and childish 'testimony' offered by the usual array of occultists, parapsychologists, and 'past lives' therapists; certainly nothing that would engage the attention of a serious researcher. Now given the antiquity of the theory of *karma* and its vast diffusion over Asia with the spread of Buddhism it would seem likely that if there were such a thing, ample evidence for its validity would have accumulated over the millenia. Since no such evidence has thus far been brought forward it seems unlikely that any ever will and so we need no more exercise ourselves over the exact psychophysical mechanisms of karmically determined rebirth than over the aerodynamics of Santa Claus' sleigh. But it is precisely here that the real scholarly interest in *karma* must begin. For if *karma* and rebirth are products of the imagination, it behoves scholarship to examine and explain, if possible, the extraordinary pervasiveness and tenacity of this fantasy in the South Asian and Buddhist cultural universe and, moreover, the enormous influence this belief has exerted and continues to exert on the lives of hundreds of millions of people even today.

4. An inquiry devoted to an examination of a fantasy, a belief in something that does not in fact exist, an irrational fear, a superstition, must, I believe, begin with a search for an element of reality that underlies the phenomenon in question. For as the work of Freud and his followers has shown us, there is in a sense no such thing as a baseless fear or belief. Indeed it is a cornerstone of psychoanalytic interpretation of the products of the imagination, whether they be dreams, delusions, fantasies, or works of art that these phenomena represent real feelings and experiences but in disguised forms. The notion of a real substratum underlying such products of the imagination is especially explanatory in the case of beliefs that are not idiosyncratic but, like the belief in *karma*, pervade whole communities and cultures. People cherish such beliefs, it would seem, not because they are ignorant or unenlightened, but because the belief in something unreal satisfies some real, compelling, and shared need.

A corollary of the theory that irrational beliefs disguise or mask genuine events and real anxieties derived from such events is that the underlying experiences are so menacing, so traumatizing that the conscious mind cannot cope with them effectively. Instead

they are subject to repression and relegated to the unconscious whence they re-emerge in the disguised and more tolerable form of the phenomena under discussion.

In the psychoanalytic view a set of beliefs such as this, a work of the imagination, becomes then a species of *roman à clef* whose elements are to be sought in the real emotional history of the person who creates or responds powerfully to it. As the elements in the fantasy system are generally not so heavily disguised as to be indecipherable, it is often helpful in attempting an interpretation to look for real elements that possess some of the characteristics of the imaginary phenomena and then to see how convincing and productive it is to hypothesize correspondences.

In applying this method to our inquiry into the significance of the concept of *karma*, it will be helpful to look at the notion that an individual's present condition is largely conditioned by his actions in a previous existence in terms of how this may reflect a real and widely shared human experience.

If we do not subscribe to the theory that people are reborn on earth after death, what can we find in verifiable experience that might correspond to the ideas of our having lived before and of our lives being powerfully determined by events in this previous life of which we have no clear or conscious memory? If the question is put in this way the condition that comes most readily to mind is that of childhood, particularly early childhood. For infancy and early childhood are surely the most dramatically formative periods of anyone's life, the periods in which actions performed and experienced most clearly affect our later lives. By the same token clear and undisguised memories of early childhood experiences are, whether through the incapacity of the infant mind or, as is so often the case, through the repressive mechanism set in motion by the traumatic nature of these experiences, frequently difficult to recover.

Let us turn, therefore, to an examination of some of the features of the Indian notion of *karma*, the more generalized Indian view of the return of the repressed, and traditional Indian ideas of memory and childhood memory with an eye towards shedding some light on the whole question.

If we leave aside the imaginary elements in the complex of ideas we subsume under the term *karma*, we are left with a set of concerns that are very real. How do events in our real, as

opposed to imaginary, pasts affect our later lives? What is our responsibility for events to which we were unwilling or even unwitting parties? What are the constraints upon our ability to recover clear memories of our early years? Central to these concerns are the issues of memory, its distortion, loss, and recovery and guilt, its assignment and displacement.

5. Some years ago at an annual meeting of the AOS, Professor Masson noted, in the course of delivering a scholarly paper, that there were, so far as he was able to discover, no references in Sanskrit literature to what could be seen as genuine childhood memories. In response Professor Ingalls, drawing upon his wide learning, remarked that Sanskrit was not alone in this omission and that other classical literatures, specifically Latin, shared it. The fact is that virtually all classical literatures, indeed all literatures until quite modern times, generally avoided any reference to the genuine emotional life of children. Indeed most premodern cultures tended to regard children, when they regarded them at all, as either scaled down adults — the literary equivalents of the medieval masters' representations of the infant Jesus — or unformed, semi-civilized creatures more in need of stringent repression than of human sympathy.

Yet despite this tendency, all authors ancient and modern, East and West, have been children and so have felt the needs, the fears, and the passions of childhood with the same searing intensity that we have come to recognize as an integral part of the process of human growth. And so, whether the literary and social mores of their times permitted explicit recollection of these feelings or not, some representation of them is bound to have broken through to inform their emotions and their works.

Such leakages occur in several ways. In one the general rule is tested by exception. Traditional Sanskrit does have a small number of references to childhood that are not simply conventionalized like the treatment of dreams. More commonly, however, the issue of childhood memory is, like the closely linked issue of oedipal aggression[7] represented in disguised and fictive form.

The corpus of Sanskrit literature is, in fact, not entirely devoid of significant references to childhood and to convincing allusions to early memories. By far the most elaborate, well-known and charming of these is the lengthy and detailed account of the

childhood of Kṛṣṇa as presented in texts such as the *Harivaṃśa*, the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, and dozens of religious and literary texts that this story has inspired. The story of Bālakṛṣṇa is interesting in that it represents — and in this it is all but unique in classical literature — a fully elaborated fantasy of an idealized childhood. Few readers of the *Viṣṇuparvan* of the *Harivaṃśa* can fail to be moved by this idyll of the boyish pranks, pleasures, and adventures of Kṛṣṇa and his brother in the enchanted forests of Vṛndāvana. Yet, aside from a few curious references that the legend has inspired in the later literature, there is little here that speaks directly to the problem of lost childhood memories and their bearing on the question of *karma*.[8] Accounts of actual childhood experiences or episodes powerfully reminiscent of the feelings, attitudes, and experiences of childhood are not common even in the copious and broadly inclusive epic literature. Two passages from the *Mahābhārata* however come to mind and may serve as a useful introduction to our discussion of the suppression and recovery of early memories.

6. In the one hundred and thirteenth *adhyāya* of the *Adiparvan* of the great epic, in the course of the debate between Kuntī and Pāṇḍu over the propriety of the practice of *niyojana*, the latter tells his queen a curious legend which holds that the rule of sexual fidelity on the part of wives, a rule deeply cherished by traditional Hindu society, was not always in force and that once even married women were free to go with any man they chose. The custom of strict fidelity, the story goes, was instituted by the brahman boy Śvetaketu,son of the great seer Uddālaka, a pair better known for their role in the philosophical dialogues of the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*. According to the episode, the prohibition on womens' sexual freedom originated when Śvetaketu, presumably as a child or young boy, observed his mother going off for a sexual liaison with some brahman who took her by the hand before the eyes of her husband and son. The boy is outraged, and his fury is not assuaged by his father's telling him that there is no cause to be excited over this immemorial custom. He then lays down the law that such practices will in the future be reckoned as sinful.[9]

The interesting thing about this story in the present connection is that it is the child and not the husband who is incensed

at the thought that his mother is walking off hand in hand with a stranger. Bizarre as the episode is, it does somehow convey a distinct flavor of some kind of genuine and upsetting childhood memory involving one's parents and the highly charged and poorly understood area of sexuality. As will be clear as we proceed, these two factors, interaction with one's elders and sex, are fundamental to virtually all of Sanskrit literature's accounts of lost or buried memories.

A still more interesting story bearing on a number of issues connected with guilt and childhood memory occurs in the same book of the *Mahābhārata*.[10] The episode is of the type — enormously common in the epic and purāṇic literature — in which a seemingly odd circumstance is explained as the result of someone's actions in the remote past. Typically, for these genres, the circumstances are viewed not as the results of the workings of an impersonal law of *karma* but rather as the result of the personal intervention, in the form of a curse, of a specific individual whose anger has been aroused. The narrator, Vaiśaṃpāyana, explaining how the god Dharma, the personification of righteousness, has come to be born as Vidura, from a low-caste mother, recounts the strange tale of the sage Aṇīmāṇḍavya, 'Māṇḍavya of the Stake'. He tells how once a band of brigands, fleeing with their loot from a party of police, hid in the ashram of the sage, taking advantage of the holy man's vow of silence and preoccupation with his austerities. The police can get no information from the silent sage and when they discover the thieves and their plunder hidden in the ashram, they arrest the holy man as an accomplice. Hauled before the king the silent *muni* is sentenced to death by impalement along with the outlaws. The sentence is duly carried out but, evidently through the power gained by his austerities, Māṇḍavya, starving and in agony, remains alive on the stake. After some time the seers come to him in the form of birds to ask him what sin he had committed to deserve such dreadful suffering. Māṇḍavya cannot recall having committed any sin but, a true adherent of his culture's *karma* doctrine, asserts that no one else can be responsible for the fault that *must* underlie his suffering.[11] The king hears of these miraculous events and comes to beg forgiveness from the sage and once this is granted, has him lowered from the stake. The stake, however, cannot be removed from the holy man's body and must be cut off, a portion

of it remaining inside. It is this extraordinary circumstance that gives Māṇḍavya his unusual sobriquet. The liberated sage now goes directly to the seat of Dharma himself to demand to know the nature of the evil *karma* that resulted in his terrible ordeal.[12] The god's response to this demand is extraordinarily interesting, 'You used to stick straws up grasshoppers' rumps, and this, ascetic, is the result of that practice (*karma*)'.[13]

The agony of impalement in retribution for a few instances of infantile sadism[14] may seem appropriate in the inflexible world of karmic *lex talionis* but just as this punishment seems grotesquely disproportionate to our sense of justice so does it infuriate the sage, the great paragon of righteousness. He rebukes the god and curses him, 'You inflict so grievous a punishment on me for such a petty infraction? For this, Dharma, you shall be born as a man and in the womb of a lowly *śūdra* at that!'[15] Then, to protect others from the consequences of their childish mischief, Māṇḍavya, making use of the metaphysical legislative power so often ascribed to great ascetics, establishes a new rule whereby acts committed before the age of fourteen cannot be accounted as sins.

There are a number of things about this strange little episode that recommend it to the attention of the student of *karma*. In the first place it is an unusually clear example of how the popular traditional literature attempts to personalize the impersonal operation of the law of *karma*. Although many people in India may generally accept the notion of *karma* as an impersonal force or mechanism, an understanding of how this mechanism 'works', how karmic accounts are kept, how the actual fruition of past deeds actually takes physical form, is something that sensible folk have left to the ingenuity of that country's plethora of metaphysical philosophers and theologians. For the vast mass of people speculations and 'authoritative' pronouncements on the workings of *karma* are uninteresting, unappealing, and in any case incomprehensible. They have, as popular literature such as the epics demonstrate, shown more interest in formulations in which the fruition of past deeds is clearly shown to be the result of the supervision and even intervention of some supernaturally empowered being, a god or a powerful ascetic. In many such instances, and I shall discuss a number of these below, retribution for a questionable action is brought about directly through the curse of a holy man or woman, but here we see an interesting and

somewhat less personalized explanation. The agent of Māṇḍavya's punishment here is none other than Dharma himself, the august personification of another of traditional India's most fundamental abstract principles. Indeed the principles of *karma* and *dharma* are closely associated for the latter is, generally speaking, the register against which the positive or negative valuation of the former is accounted. In the case of Aṇīmāṇḍavya we see a position intermediate between the religio-philosophical notion of *karma* as an abstract and impersonal principle, a 'law of nature' and the epic/purāṇic transposition whereby one may incur positive or negative *karma* through deference or abuse respectively directed to powerful and heavily cathected figures. Māṇḍavya, it should be noted, does not transgress directly against Dharma. Nor does the god curse him. The sage's crime is not so much against Dharma as against *dharma*; and so the god has dispassionately assigned fitting retribution: He who sticks things up the rectum of a creature shall, in the course of time and in rigid keeping with a Hammurabian principle of justice, have things stuck up his. Dharma here is seen as an impartial judge who monitors the transgressions of all men and somehow manages to assign meet punishment to be carried out blindly by unwitting agents such as the king in this story. In short, a personified Dharma is acting in effect like a personified Karma seeing to it that all actions, however trivial they may seem, are appropriately requited. In avenging the insect-victims of the child-Māṇḍavya on the body of the adult ascetic, however, the god has it seems failed to temper justice with mercy and thus has been led to assign too severe a punishment for a relatively trivial offense. He has also failed to take into account the power of a wronged holy man and so falls victim himself to the sage's curse.

Most importantly from the point of view of our inquiry into the conception and the workings of *karma*, the story of Māṇḍavya raises the question of responsibility. For what strikes one here, even more poignantly than in the sad little tale of the young Śvetaketu, is a breaking through into the often weird fantasy world of the *Mahābhārata*, of a feeling of something real, of the sense in which we both are and are not the same people we were as children. Māṇḍavya stands accused of having committed a breach of law[16] but, because of normal childhood amnesia, has no recollection of his offense. Is he responsible for a

crime committed so long ago? Is there no karmic statute of limitations, no metaphysical equivalent of most secular penal codes' distinction between the responsibilities of children and adults? Evidently this has been a gray area and Māṇḍavya, victimized by the lack of precedent in this matter, takes things into his own hands and establishes for all time the rule that children under the age of fourteen are not responsible for their actions.[17] Now if, as seems clear, we are to read this story in part as a dramatic and personalized illustration of the operations of the law of *karma*, one that, like other natural and social laws treated in the epics is subject to change at the hands of certain powerful figures, then it would seem that at least one element of the tradition regards this law, this system of cause and effect, to operate differently, or not at all, in the case of minors.

7. The notion that small children are not to be held accountable for their actions — their *karma* — is not merely a curiosity of the traditional literature for its implications are considerable. What the story of Māṇḍavya suggests, I believe, is that despite the heroic efforts of Buddhist, Jaina, and Hindu philosophers to define and rationalize *karma* as a vast impersonal and unvarying law of cosmic mechanics it is widely felt to be a more complicated phenomenon and one more accessible to human experience. What is felt, and, as we shall see, often clearly suggested, is that one's *karma* is heavily conditioned by one's interactions, especially negative interactions, with powerful figures who, if angered, can bring down the most dire consequences but who, if propitiated, can actually protect one against the consequences of one's deeds.[18]

At the heart of the belief in *karma*, then, is a pervasive fear, fear of having transgressed against someone, perhaps unconsciously in a period of one's life of which one has only the most dim recollection, and the anxiety that if something is not done to make good that transgression, that person, or some representative of that person will exact some hideous and yet fitting and well-deserved retribution. But it is most often the case that the person so feared is exactly the person — be it father, mother, guru, or other societally ordained authority figure — one is supposed to love the most and is taught to regard as himself brimming with love for the child, disciple, subordinate etc. To cope with the stress of the conflict thus generated between

coerced affection and very real anxiety, the individual may take refuge in mechanisms to distance the focus of anxiety from its real source. This may be accomplished by the creation of fantasy figures, irascible and menacing brahmans such as Durvāsas and Viśvāmitra, outright monsters like Rāvaṇa and Kaṃsa, nightmarish divinities such as Bhairava and Kālī, and austere judges like Yama or, as he is often called, Dharma. If, as is often the case, even such monstrous creations as these are felt to be uncomfortably close to their human inspirations, the terrified spirit may take comfort in the elaboration of wholly impersonal forces that are supposed to constrain all human life without reminding us too clearly of our own personal nightmares. In this category we must place the concepts of *dharma* and, quintessentially, *karma*.

Central to the powerful but somewhat inchoate anxiety that appears to underlie the whole issue of *karma* are the questions of amnesia and guilt that lie at the heart of the tale of Aṇīmāṇḍavya. Without examining the tradition's handling of these phenomena it will not be possible to gain a complete understanding of the psychology of *karma*. The two issues are closely related in the traditional literature's accounts of the working out of *karmavipāka* whether the agent of requital is personal or impersonal. In the episode of Māṇḍavya the amnesia, the normal forgetfulness of early childhood, is implicit. The sage cannot think of anything he has done to deserve impalement and the god must inform him of his infantile crimes. The question of guilt, or responsibility, is complicated. Dharma, speaking as the voice of traditional morality and jurisprudence, holds Māṇḍavya responsible for his actions despite his ignorance of them and assigns the appropriate punishment. The sage, however, rejects the god's position and argues successfully for the karmic immunity of children. Now the larger tradition's position on the accountability of children is not wholly clear. What is clear, however, is its virtual unanimity on the question of karmic accountability for actions performed during other prior existences of which the individual has no conscious recollection. These states, analogous in many ways to the state of early childhood, are the *pūrvajanmas*, the past lives that form the substratum of the larger theory of *karma*. As with early childhood, conscious recollection of previous lives is everywhere in the tradition regarded as exceptional and beyond

the mental capacities of all but a few highly enlightened and spiritually advanced souls, *buddhas*, *jinas*, *gurus*, *yogins*, *siddhas*, and the like.[19]

But just as traditional authorities agree on the virtual impossibility of memory carrying over from one life to another in the case of ordinary people they are unanimous in their view that, despite this almost universal unconsciousness of one's past deeds, the responsibility for these deeds is in no way lost or diminished. Indeed this is the painful crux of the *karma* problem. The individual is made to feel guilt and is urged to accept his sufferings as punishment for things done by another person in another time, things over which the suffering individual could exercise no control and of which he has no knowledge or recollection. These are, one must admit, unusual terms for the promulgation of what purports to be a moral system. A man in effect suffers the fruits of the actions of someone who can only by a leap of faith be regarded as himself while his own actions in life harm or benefit still a third party in a future existence. This seeming anomaly, on which only further confusion is heaped by the tradition's 'explanatory' texts,[20] cannot have appealed to so many people of all social strata for so many centuries purely on its highly dubious logical grounds. Neither are its premises or its effects self-evident. Surely there must be some powerful emotional appeal to this bizarre theory of human destiny that has accounted for its acceptance and popularity. In order for us to understand this appeal it will be necessary to look more closely at the traditional literature's handling of the associated issues of oblivion and responsibility.

8. Amnesia, the forgetting of all or some of the events of the past is, we see, normative both in the case of early childhood and in that of 'past lives'. But what of that class of events that occur within the adult period of a single lifetime? The actions that seem to have the most dramatic and negative consequences in the Sanskrit epic, purāṇic, and literary texts are often those whereby a character intentionally or otherwise slights, insults, or injures a figure to whom veneration is due. And the instrument through which the transgressor is made to suffer the dire consequences of his misdeed is the curse, virtually the favourite stock plot device and explanatory mechanism of the Sanskrit poets. The curse of

a wronged person is ubiquitous in Indian literature, and no one from the highest gods down to the vilest of men and demons is spared this ever present danger. In fact a thoughtful reading of influential texts such as the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa* must soon convince one that the enormous proliferation of curses that one sees in these works is not only a narrative cliché but a constant warning to their audience of the ineluctable and dreadful consequences of certain kinds of action. In short, the convention of the curse is nothing but a dramatic personalization of the idea of *karma*. In fact, in its focus on precisely those actions that generate the greatest emotional stress and anxiety in the culture, the tradition of the curse of the insulted brahman or other authority figure is, I suspect, a representation of those fears with which the *karma* doctrine and its apologists are attempting to cope. If this is correct, then *karma* and curses are two fantasies deriving from the same underlying phenomenon and the latter, being less disguised, can serve to shed light on the former.

For this reason it is of particular interest to observe that in a significant number of episodes recounted in epic, purāṇic and literary texts the victim of a curse is, for one reason or another, subject to a focal amnesia which prevents him or her from remembering the curse and the offense that inspired it, often with serious or even disastrous results. Moreover it is often precisely these forgotten curses that are of the greatest significance for the development of the larger stories of which they form a part. In order to demonstrate this it will be useful to look at four examples drawn respectively from the two Sanskrit epics, and two widely known and influential works of the great poet-playwright Kālidāsa.

The central event and principal narrative crux of the *Rāmāyaṇa* is unquestionably the dispossession and exile of Rāma. The early portion of the epic culminates with this crisis while the circumstances and consequences of the event occupy the whole of the large and seminal *Ayodhyākāṇḍa*. Furthermore, the banishment of Rāma with Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā sets the stage for the princess' abduction the consequences of which will consume the energies of the epic poet for the bulk of the last five books of the monumental poem. The poet, in the manner of the epic/purāṇic bards, is at pains to provide a convincing explanation, a karmic rationale for the extraordinary and unexpected succession crisis at the Koṣalan court. As the aged and emotionally broken King

Daśaratha lies on the death bed to which he has been driven by his forced banishment of his favorite son, he suddenly recovers a painful memory from his own youth. He recalls that as a young warrior, filled with the pride of his martial skills, he had once shot, aiming by the sound, the only son of an old, blind ascetic couple. The horror-stricken prince brings the body of the boy to his parents and is cursed by the grieving and now doomed father to die himself of sorrow for his son and it is this curse, functioning as a dramatic bit of *karma*, that Daśaratha now recognizes as the cause of his and his son's tragedy.[21]

What is of particular interest in the present connection about this story is that Daśaratha has, up to the very moment of his death, utterly forgotten the episode. One would expect that such a traumatic event would haunt a person continually, but on the contrary the king has no memory of it even when, upon the birth of his own sons, one would expect the curse of the blind ascetic to come back to him.

This dramatic and critical event in the early life of the father of the *Rāmāyaṇa*'s heroes is paralleled by a very similar occurrence in the early career of Pāṇḍu, the father of the heroes of the *Mahābhārata*. Like his Ikṣvāku counterpart, the Bhārata prince is indulging his passion for hunting when he comes upon a pair of mating deer. Ignoring the etiquette of the chase he shoots the preoccupied buck only to discover — to his horror — that the creature is not what it appears to be. The buck is in fact a misanthropic forest hermit who has taken on animal form in order to discharge his sexual energies in the exercise of bestiality. The stricken sage curses the prince indicating that, for his offense, he too will die in the rapture of sex.[22] Forbidden the pleasures of sex the king makes a virtue of necessity and himself takes to the life of a renunciant sage. And it is precisely his enforced celibacy that sets in motion the device of Kuntī's boon whereby the principal vedic divinities are summoned to father the epic's five heroes, the Pāṇḍavas, in Pāṇḍu's name thus lending the tale much of its symbolic substance and its protagonists their characters and attributes. Nonetheless Pāṇḍu, like Daśaratha, will come to forget the curse in a few years and so, overcome by sexual desire for his wife Mādrī, fall victim to it.[23] In both cases the princes unintentionally assault figures whom the tradition requires them to revere and are cursed to die for their transgressions. Yet in both cases

they somehow forget the curses and the crimes that engendered them.

The motif of a curse pronounced in return for some insult or injury to a venerable personage is, to be sure, enormously common in the Sanskrit epics. Indeed it may be said to be the single most common motif at the epic poets' disposal for the furtherance and rationalization of their often impossibly complicated plots.[24] Nonetheless in these two extremely seminal instances the additional motif of oblivion was thought by the authors to be vital.

Turning from the epics to the *kāvya* literature that it inspired we find two illuminating examples critical to two of the influential works of Kālidāsa. The first is found in the *Raghuvaṃśa* and once again, like the two epic instances adduced, it is closely connected with issues of procreation and succession. The great Ikṣvāku monarch Dilīpa, like his descendant Daśaratha, is somehow unable to beget an heir. He makes a pilgrimage to the ashram of his guru and family preceptor, Vasiṣṭha, only to be told that his infertility is the result of a curse of which he is totally unaware. He learns that once, when returning to heaven, hastening in his preoccupation with reaching home before the end of his wife's period of sexual availability, he had omitted to perform due obeisance to the divine wish-fulfilling cow who stood by the roadway. The cow curses him for his disrespect to suffer infertility, a disability he will be unable to surmount until he propitiates yet another cow. Due, however, to the roaring of the celestial river Gañgā, then near at hand, neither the king nor his charioteer hear the curse. Thus, unaware of his lapse and of its dire consequences, the king must suffer in ignorance until he is enlightened by his omniscient guru.[25] Once more a crucial misdeed in a man's early life occurs unintentionally or even unconsciously and yet, as in the case of Māṇḍavya, he must suffer greatly for it through the inexorable fruition of a curse of which he has no knowledge or recollection.

Perhaps the best known, most complex, and most illuminating case of a victim unaware of a curse serves as the central fulcrum of the plot of Kālidāsa's celebrated drama, *Śakuntalā*. This curse, pronounced by the irascible sage Durvāsas on the innocent and love-smitten heroine in the fourth act of the play, is interesting for a number of reasons. For one thing the imprecation and its consequences provide the work with virtually all of its plot and

dramatic tension. Moreover, like the curse of Dilīpa, that of Śakuntalā is uttered without the knowledge of its victim. The heroine, mooning over her new lover, is blissfully unaware of her failure to greet and honor the sage properly and is likewise ignorant of his vengeful curse. Her friends, thinking that they have saved the situation by propitiating Durvāsas, keep the distressing business from her so that once again we see a traditional text punishing someone for a deed of which he is unaware with a damaging curse of which he knows nothing. The situation is not unlike that of Māṇḍavya and again one is forced to think in terms of the parallel operation of *karma* in which the deeds of our early (or previous) lives and their damaging effects become clear to us only after the fact and after we have had a chance to amend them.

What is particularly interesting about the curse of Śakuntalā is that in addition to its victim's obliviousness to its existence its substantive effect is to make her the object of still more serious oblivion on the part of her beloved Duṣyanta. Several points are worthy of note here. For one thing the curse has its principal effect on a person other than the one whose behavior has provoked it. It is the king who is made to forget Śakuntalā and the events surrounding their meeting and the blossoming of their love. In other words, he is made to suffer for the actions of another, actions of which he is completely innocent. This functional sharing or even transfer of the fruits of one person's actions is a recurrent theme in accounts and illustrations of the workings of *karma*, and I shall return to it shortly.

Also interesting is the fact that the king's amnesia, like that of childhood or the previous lives posited by the *karma* doctrine, is not total. The tradition holds that although conscious memory of the events of past lives is erased except in the case of certain extraordinary individuals and in some extraordinary circumstances all of us carry within us subconscious emotional residues of our earlier experiences. It is this, for example, that is used by some writers of the *rasa* school of poetics to explain the fact that all of us respond appropriately to the fundamental emotional moods even if we have not experienced them in our current life. Indeed the most beautiful and widely known exposition of this doctrine of *vāsanā* is made by Duṣyanta himself in the fifth act of the play. Through the effect of Durvāsas' curse, the king has

lost all conscious memory of Śakuntalā and his love for her. As he sits on his throne chatting with his jester he hears a court lady, a former favorite, singing a song in which a faithless lover, in fact the king himself, is obliquely chided. The king is amused at the cleverness of the lady's rebuke and sends the clown to compliment her. Then suddenly, left to himself, the king falls prey to an access of sorrowful longing even though, he reminds himself, he is not separated from a loved one. Puzzled, he takes reassurance from the traditional notion of the survival of emotional substrates from past lives: 'When he sees things of great beauty or hears sweet sounds even a happy man may be filled with passionate longing. It must be that somewhere in his mind he remembers, although not consciously, the loves of his previous lives lodged there as lingering impressions.'[26]

What is striking is the irony that in this, the literature's most feeling statement of the persistence of emotions from one life to another, Duṣyanta is mistaken. The love that sparks his sudden sense of loss and longing does not belong to a prior birth. It is but a few months old and has sunk from his conscious memory not through the oblivion of death but the induced amnesia of the sage's curse. Rarely in the literature can we see an author so clearly, if perhaps unintentionally, associating the forgetfulness of past lives with the amnesia of a single lifetime. Once again an episode from the literature suggests to us that the traditional conception of the operation of *karma* and the memory of previous lives is similar to and in fact derived from the sense that all of us have of the loss or suppression of memories and emotions belonging to earlier periods of our actual lives.

9. One final issue that merits discussion in connection with the study of the concept and mechanisms of *karma* is that raised in connection with the stories — meant, we take it, to be edifying — of Māṇḍavya and Śakuntalā: the issue of responsibility. In the one, it will be recalled, an adult is horribly punished for a seemingly insignificant childhood prank. In the other a man is made to lose contact with and even memory of his wife and child because of her trivial breach of etiquette.

The question that needs to be addressed here is that of who, exactly, suffers the consequences of a given unit of karmically significant action. The problem faced and, we are told, solved by

Māṇḍavya must be generalized both in terms of individuals affected and of the length of the interval that separates action from fruition or, as in most cases cited in the literature, between crime and punishment. For surely the underlying ethical issue in the matter of *karma* is that we have no conscious recollection of our earlier lives and can only dumbly plead *nolo contendere* to the charges implicit in our mundane sufferings, sufferings that in a karmic universe can only be our just desserts for dreadful things we did in other births.

Thus, according to the theory of *karma* we live in a strange and morally blind universe in which our own actions may see their rewards in the lives of other people while we must content ourselves with the fruits of the actions of still others who — we must take it on faith — were somehow identical with us. We cannot even expect to know exactly what it is 'we' have done. Or can we? The fact is that a system such as that which Indian culture has evolved and supported under the rubric of *karma* cannot sustain itself entirely on theory and abstract belief. Like any other successful religious system, Hinduism has spawned a professional, if parasitic, class of entrepreneurs prepared to serve the 'spiritual needs' of the faithful, and in doing so, earn their livelihood.

Just as the people who still undergo the vedic *saṃskāras* continue to support a class of specialized ritualists and the devotees of the *bhakti* cults give employment to *ācāryas* and *pūjāris*, those concerned with their karmic problems provide a living to a specialized group of astrologers. Now of course in fact, the three classes of clients and practitioners heavily overlap one another, but it is to the last that it will be relevant to turn here. Indians worried about their personal, social, career, and family problems can turn to an astrologer, as in any culture, to be told what the stars have in store for them and which activities they should undertake and which they should avoid. The virtually total pervasion of the notion of *karma* however has lent to some Indian astrologers an additional technique. These *paṇḍits* claim access to a set of remarkable texts sometimes known collectively as the *Bhṛgusaṃhitā* which are supposed to provide documentation of a client's accumulated *karma* and suggestions for its expiation or neutralization.

Not surprisingly these fantasied accounts of individuals' past lives draw their inspiration from the same psychological nexus

that inform the tales of curses and malign *karma* that make up so much of the substance of the epic, purāṇic, romance, and religious literature of traditional India. Once more we see that peoples' misfortunes are viewed as the results of insults or injuries offered to venerable figures of authority in their 'previous' lives. And once again the negative consequences of these transgressions may be experienced most seriously by people close to but different from the 'guilty' party.

Let me provide an example taken from an actual *Bhṛgu-saṃhitā* which was drawn up for a friend of mine in India. The text, typically represented as a dialogue between the sage Bhṛgu and another party (in this case the enigmatic Bhārgava priest Śukra), describes the client, giving information about his social class, physical characteristics, and family. It then proceeds to detail the misfortunes concerning marriage, career, and loss of family members that he can expect. Śukra naturally asks the question appropriate to the karmic view of the world, viz. what dreadful deed did this person do so as to merit so miserable a fate (*kiṃ karma kṛtaṃ tad ghorarūpakam* . . .). Bhṛgu responds by saying that in a previous birth the unhappy fellow, who was then a man of property and a village magistrate, had falsely imprisoned an innocent brahman in order to acquire his land. The innocent man dies in prison and it is for that reason, Bhṛgu assures Śukra, that his oppressor, now several births down the line, will suffer the premature death of his father. In addition his mother, brothers and sisters will be beset with all manner of difficulties while his own life will be plagued with financial woes, the machinations of rivals and all sorts of other catastrophes.

But the purpose of all this is, of course, not purely informational. The situation can yet be saved and this can be accomplished through the performance of rituals on the banks of the Ganges and, not unexpectedly, the presentation of monetary gifts to appropriate recipients, chiefly, one is given to understand, the brahmans and most especially the one responsible for this revelation.

Metaphysics aside, it is clear that the operative psychological principles behind all of this are guilt and anxiety. The client, a non-brahman, is made to feel guilt for having aggressed against a father figure, a venerable brahman,[27] and his anxiety is powerfully reinforced by the revelation of the connection between this

crime and his present suffering. This point is brought home most poignantly by the assertion that it is the wrongful death of the imaginary brahman that is directly responsible for the death of the client's father. The man has in effect murdered his father twice. What is going on here? What could possibly induce intelligent and well educated people to take this nonsense seriously, so seriously that they may be willing to follow the bizarre instructions of their astrologers in a desperate effort to escape the consequences of their criminal past? No explanation will account for this other than that the accusations of the *Bhṛgusaṃhitā* correspond closely to some genuine and extremely powerful complex of emotions experienced by those to whom it is addressed. And what could that complex of emotions plausibly be other than the desire in fact to kill one's father and the powerful mixture of guilt and devastating anxiety that that desire must generate especially in a social milieu in which the father and his surrogates are both abusive and menacing to their sons? Indian tradition has made a literary convention of representing the father/guru/sage as a distant, irascible, and terrifying figure ready to explode with the most nightmarish curses for the most trivial provocation, and the persistence of this stereotype and the force that it continues to exert on the minds of many Indians is evidence that it is a representation of reality rather than a pure creation of the literary imagination. In other words, we are dealing here with a version of the oedipal conflict that suggests that the parricidal anger felt by most, if not all, small children (and the adults into which they grow) is not exclusively the result of fantasies of infantile aggression. Rather, as much of the Indian material, both textual and real, makes clear this anger is at least in part reactive in that it is a natural response to emotional and physical abuse suffered at the hands of adults. Such anger, in a culture like India's, can only be turned inward. The same cultural and social climate that so strongly militates against open expression of hostility towards parents and parental figures tends however to reinforce this anger through the perpetuation of its original stimulus in the proliferation of new and heavily invested authority figures, the brahman, the *patel*, the guru, the swami, the teacher, the government official, etc., each of whom plays upon the individual's profound sense of helplessness to express or even articulate his rage.

Such an emotional climate, widely pervasive in most cultures but heavily institutionalized and thinly disguised in traditional India, easily gives rise to a situation where the victim of abuse, encouraged to revere, even worship his abuser, can react only by an identification with him coupled with severe anxiety lest he become aware of the deeply buried but powerful hatred he has aroused. In this blind circle of negative emotions a kind of shared paranoia is generated as a result of which people begin to view the natural misfortunes of their lives as richly deserved punishment for their past aggressions and genuine hostility towards their parents and those who have come to represent them. But in a society that values above all else filial deference and devotion[28] it is unthinkable to own up to one's negative feelings towards one's elders. It is especially difficult for someone in such a situation to ascribe such feelings to children or to take responsibility for them as genuine emotions produced by real events in his own early life. Yet the feelings and the terrible anxieties they generate are nonetheless real. What better way to partially confess to the former while at the same time fractionally discharging the latter than to ascribe the aggression to someone who both is and is not oneself? If these dark feelings are the result of real events in one's past life, then by all means let us push the boundaries of our past back beyond our childhood into the shadowy realm of 'past lives' where we can play out the assaults and counter-aggressions for which we must still suffer without fully acknowledging a real and personal responsibility. Here, in fact, is the nexus of the problem of *karma*. The almost universal Indian belief in the reality of past lives and of the dreadful power of oedipally aggressive actions in those lives to make us suffer in the present is after all a culturally normative and institutionally supported fantasy whose central purpose is to enable people to distance themselves from the painful experiences of their own childhoods and yet, by expressing and partially owning them, to cope with them to some degree. In this way the culture, with its epics, its religious movements, its gurus, astrologers, *dharmaśāstras*, and *Bhṛgu-saṃhitās*, has created, diffused, and institutionalized an elaborate system that can in part be viewed as a psychotherapeutic device to aid its people in grappling with some of the more painful and intransigent problems of human life.

What is needed now is for humanists interested in the problems of human culture — India's being but one of many — to examine phenomena, or, we should say, the belief in phenomena such as *karma* with an eye turned not so much towards metaphysics and philosophy as towards their real — i.e., their human — dimensions. For it is only in this way that we can continue to add to our store of understanding of peoples, cultures, and their artifacts, material, philosophical, and religious.

Notes

1. 'What is Karma (Kiṃ Karmeti)? An Exercise in Philosophical Semantics' published in the Proceedings of the Conference-Seminar on Indological Studies, volume X, 1982, (of *Indologica Taurinensia Torino*, 1982) pp. 87–116.
2. Op. cit., p. 87.
3. Ibid.
4. KR, p. xi.
5. I say more or less because various Indian systems allow for the interpolation of heavenly (even divine) or hellish reincarnations among an individual's earthly existences.
6. KR, p. xxv.
7. For an elaborate discussion of the ways in which the Sanskrit epic poets disguise the emotions underlying the so-called oedipal complex, see my papers: 'Fathers, Sons, and Gurus: Oedipal Conflict in the Sanskrit Epics', *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, 6, 1978, pp. 325–92, and Matricide, Renunciation, and Compensation in the Legends of Two Warrior-Heroes of the Sanskrit Epics, *Indologica Taurinensia*, X, 1982, pp. 117–31.
8. The references are not to memories of Kṛṣṇa's own childhood but rather to his own memories, both as a child and adult, of events and tactile sensations of previous existences. Thus in one verse, of which versions are to be found both in the *Kṛṣṇakarṇāmṛta* and the Hindi *Sūrsāgar*, the child Kṛṣṇa, being lulled to sleep by a bedtime story of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, slips into a compelling memory of his previous incarnation as Rāma. Also suggestive in the context of early childhood memory is the verse at *Kāvyaprakāśa* 10.552 (Poona: Anandashrama Press edition, 1929) in which the infant Kṛṣṇa, putting his hands to Yaśodā's breast and taking the nipple between his lips, is

suddenly pierced by the memory of the touch of the mighty battle conch, Pāñcajanya, which he wielded earlier as Viṣṇu.

9. *Mbh.* 1.113.3–20. All epic references are to the critical editions of the *Mbh.* (Poona) and the *Rām.* (Baroda) unless otherwise specified.
10. *Mbh.* 1.101.
11. '*doṣataḥ kaṃ gamiṣyāmi na hi me nyo parādhyati*'| (*Mbh.* 1.101.26).
12. *kiṃ nu tad duṣkṛtaṃ karma mayā kṛtam ajānatā* |
yasyeyaṃ phalanivṛttir īdṛśy āsāditā mayā ||
(*Mbh.* 1.101.23).
13. *patañgakānāṃ pucchesu tvayeṣīkā praveśitā* |
karmaṇas tasya te prāptaṃ phalam etat tapodhana ||
(*Mbh.* 1.101.24).
14. It is only by inference, through the character of Māṇḍavya's exclusion of childhood actions from the realm of effective *karma*, that we know, in the critical edition of the epic, that the sage engaged in the torture of insects in his early life. The southern recension of the *Mbh.* has a verse (crit. app. 1100*) in which, responding to the sage's question, Dharma tells him that he did these things in childhood.
15. *Mbh.* 1.101.25.
16. If no specific stricture of the *śāstras* has been violated, then at the least there has been *a* transgression of the general shibboleth of Hinduism, '*ahiṃsā paramo dharmaḥ*'.
17. This is somewhat out of keeping with the traditional age of majority in India, normally set at sixteen. The reason for the disparity is not clear, and I am unable to find other references to the fourteenth year as a point of significant transition from childhood liberty to adult responsibility. For further remarks on the age of majority see P.V. Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, vol. 1, part 1 (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1968) p. 475, and Goldman and Sutherland, *The Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki*: An Epic of Ancient India, vol. 1 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984) p. 325, note to *Rām.* 1.19.2.
18. The idea that a powerful and benevolent figure can, when properly propitiated, somehow intervene to abrogate the otherwise immutable nature of an individual's *karma* is in fact fundamental to the most significant trend in Hinduism, the rise and pervasive spread of the *bhakti* cults. Critical to the

thinking underlying the *bhakti* movement is the belief that the divinity can step in and grant salvation to those whose actual karmic records would, by rights, earn them only perdition. In a number of cases meant to be illustrative, such as the traditional devotional biography of Vālmīki, the highwayman turned holy man and poet through his devotion to Rāma or the South Indian Śaiva legends of the redemption of the most vile sinners, we see clearly how the grace of a god can negate even an accumulation of the most unpropitious *karma*.

19. Even so lofty and extraordinary a personage as a full-fledged *avatāra* of a supreme divinity may be represented as having lost, through the very fact of human birth, the capacity to remember past existences. It is this, for example, that lends poignancy to Vaiṣṇava verses of the *smaraṇa* type such as those in the *Kṛṣṇakarṇāmṛta*, rhetorical treatises, poetic anthologies, and even vernacular collections such as the *Sūrsāgar* that show the child Kṛṣṇa recalling his earlier births as Rāma and so on only in the strange mental state between sleeping and waking or when subjected to some tactile or physical stimulus.
20. Compare, for example, Nāgasena's facile analogies given in response to the very reasonable questions of King Milinda regarding the identification of what, if anything, transmigrates from one body to another at *Milindapañha* 46 and 71.
21. This episode, known to the sectarian tradition as the *ṛṣi-kumāravadha*, is found at *Rām* 2.58.
22. The story is told at *Mbh*. 1.109.1.
23. *Mbh*. 1.116.1–15.
24. For an elaborate discussion of the significance of the motif see Goldman, 'Fathers, Sons, and Gurus: Oedipal Conflict in the Sanskrit Epics', *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, 6, 1978, pp. 325–92.
25 The journey to Vasiṣṭha, the explanation of the curse, and the story of Dilīpas's bizarre propitiation of the cow occupy most of the first and all of the second canto of the long poem.
26. *Abhiñānaśakuntalā* Act 5 vs. 2. The commentator Rāghavabhaṭṭa remarks, in part, on these impressions that, 'It is impossible to shake them off even after thousands of lives'.
27. For an elaborate discussion of the use of the brahman as a stock father-figure and the cow as the corresponding mother surrogate see my 'Fathers, Sons, and Gurus: Oedipal Conflict in the Sanskrit Epics'.

28. Consider, for example, the numerous legends in the Sanskrit epics whose sole point is to illustrate the good things that come to those who defer, even suicidally, to their fathers and gurus and the disasters that befall those who cross them in even the most minor ways.

12

When a Lingam is Just a Good Cigar: Psychoanalysis and Hindu Sexual Fantasies

Wendy Doniger

Part I: The Problem

Dreams and Myths

Stories from ancient India present a great boon to psychoanalysts trained in the Freudian, Western tradition. The blatant sexuality of Hindu myths has often been noted. Aldous Huxley once said that an intellectual was someone who had found something more interesting than sex; in Indology, an intellectual need not make that choice at all. Fantasies that depth psychology speculates might exist in the minds of infants or young children are actually attested to in the recorded literature of Indian adults. Thus the Hindu stories seem to corroborate Freudian hypotheses about infant sexuality.

But at the same time, the Hindu myths raise broader questions about the very nature of symbolism, particularly the symbolism of dreams. In order to formulate tentative answers to these questions, we must begin by attempting to clarify the distinction between dreams and myths. Why do we think there is a connection between dreams and myths at all? There are several good reasons. First of all, Freud himself suggested the connection (Freud 1900: 386–9). Second, many traditional cultures have suggested the connection, in both directions: shamans and holy men claim to have had dreams which then become the substance

of myths; people who wish to have significant dreams 'incubate' them in temples and shrines where myths are told; and people incorporate into their dreams many of the cultural symbols that they have learned from myths. Third, we ourselves can see direct connections between certain phenomena that occur in myths and in dreams but not, usually, in other cultural expressions, the sorts of things that we now call 'surreal': transformations (people turning into animals, etc.), distortions of time and space, people flying, and so forth.

On a continuum of narrative forms, myth mediates between the entirely personal, or solipsistic, of which the dream is the quintessential example, and the entirely general, or abstract, of which a logical syllogism is the quintessential example. Dreams are private; a myth is a dream that has gone public. Dreams are made to be forgotten, myths to be remembered. People possess myths, but dreams possess people. The myth is the secondary elaboration that attempts, always in vain, to recapture the dream. And since it can never succeed, it generates an infinite number of failures (Lévi-Strauss 1963: 229) — or iterations, with significant changes, rather than repetitions, literally the same (to use Lacan's terms). We might say that a dream is to a myth as a penis is to a phallus: Neither a dream nor a penis is ever available to us unmediated, without the veil of language and symbolism; each hovers behind the symbol (i.e., the myth or the phallus) to give it meaning.

In his response to my book, *Dreams, Illusion, and Other Realities* (O'Flaherty 1984), Sudhir Kakar pointed out the importance of this distinction, drawing his own distinction between 'real' dreams (the product of the unconscious), imaginative creations (the product of conscious thought, a category that would include myths), and 'invented dreams', elaborate literary creations that are presented by the texts as the dreams of one or another character (which draw upon both conscious and unconscious thought and thus mediate between dreams and myths). In the words of Kakar:

> These dreams [recorded in the Sanskrit myths] are not even the invented dreams one is familiar with from literature and which stand midway between real dreams and imaginative creations. Invented dreams in literature can indeed be interpreted by paying very close attention to their context, to the dreamer's feelings and thoughts at

waking and to the associations of the audience or the analyst (in place of the missing associations of the dreamer, as in analytical practice). All these techniques which succeed in interpreting dreams in literature, at least to the analyst's satisfaction, simply do not succeed with the Indian dreams. From the psychological viewpoint, they are not dreams but imaginative creations, conceits in the service of the metaphysical narrative . . . in spite of their formal similarities to what we today call dreams (1984: 363).

In the more technical psychoanalytical sense, the myth cannot have latent content on a personal level; only the people who respond to the myth have, each his or her own, latent meanings for the myth, in the strict sense of the term. But a myth has a latent *cultural* meaning that the culture as a whole may mask. Out of context, anything can symbolize anything; the context of a dream is provided by the personal associations of the individual dreamer, and the context of a myth by the associations of the culture. And because the culture is embodied in people, we must search for the associations of the culture in the cumulative glosses offered by a group, rather than by an individual, within the culture. We can do this by looking at a group of other myths (as Claude Lévi-Strauss advises us to do), commentaries on the myths (as classical philology advises us to do), and the broader data or 'thick description' supplied by other cultural expressions (as Clifford Geertz advises us to do).

The hermeneutics of suspicion — the belief that a text can mean something other than what the author thinks it means, a hermeneutic derived directly from Freud — prevents us, however, from simply asking members of the culture what they think the symbol means. Many Hindus, for instance, will argue that the *lingam* has nothing whatsoever to do with the male sexual organ, an assertion blatantly contradicted by much of the material that we will soon examine. The gloss offered from within the culture must be accepted as a truth, but only a partial truth. We must also find other, more indirect cultural contexts, such as the patterns formed by other myths, or the rituals associated with the myth, or other evidence of how the myth is used in society.

Because the interpretation of symbols (such as phalluses) depends in part on the context supplied by the culture (as group dreamer), cross-cultural investigation may produce a disharmonious clash of symbols: It may well be that Hindu children,

whose relationship to their parents is different from that of Viennese Jewish children, will not wield their phallic symbols in the ways that Freud anticipated. But the implicit gloss supplied by the context that one myth, one variant, constitutes for another, does seem to validate Freud's arguments about the processes, the mechanisms by which dreams and myths make use of symbols. The clue lies in the range not of content but of process (LaCapra 1991). Thus, for instance, the fact that the vaginas in one variant of the Indra myth are replaced by eyes in another variant, or indeed that one variant actually *says* that the eyes replaced the vaginas, is good evidence for the process of upward displacement. But it is by no means a foregone conclusion that eyes or vaginas have the meaning for Hindus that they have for Freudians. The signifiers remain the same, but what is signified may be very different. Despite these shifts in what is actually signified, however, the process of signification is something that Freud has taught us to recognize, and that we can recognize in Benares as well as in New York. Thus, the inversion and condensation that are at the heart of Freud's theory of the interpretation of dreams and Lévi-Strauss' interpretation of myths (*pace* Lévi-Strauss' anti-Freudian protests) are clearly at work in the Hindu myths. The processes, therefore, may well be universal even if the contents are not.

The Manifest Latency of Unsymbols

If, then, we accept, with these modifications, a basic correspondence between the symbolic processes of dreams and the basic symbolic processes of myths, we are left with a problem. The blatant sexuality of Hindu myths challenges us to refine the Freudian assumption that a symbol *always* hides something else. Indian texts seem to express sexual violence in an unmasked form; things that are latent, symbolized by other things in the West, are manifest, symbolized only by themselves, in many Indian texts. Or so it seems. One might well ask: If all this is manifest, what is latent? What is it that these stories reveal and conceal? If what is on the surface is sex, what is below the surface? What implications do these stories have for Freudian and post-Freudian theories of sexual symbolism?

There are three possible approaches to the challenge posed

by the manifest latency, as it were, of Indian myths. First, we can say that they have nothing to do with dreams, nothing to do with the unconscious, at all, and leave it at that. If we reject this option, as I think we must, and instead acknowledge the relationship, however attenuated, between dreams and myths, we are left with two more options. We can jettison either the Freudian assumption that a symbol always hides something else or that what the symbol always hides is sexual. In the first case, we can argue that some elements of dreams or myths are simply not symbolic, that they stand literally for themselves; indeed this is the case for some, though not for all. But if we wish to argue that some dreams and myths do indeed contain symbols (and I can hardly see how we can fail to do this), we must ask what it is that they symbolize. Let us examine these last two options.

In the introduction to *The Trial(s) of Psychoanalysis*, Françoise Meltzer writes:

> There is the famous anecdote about Freud: upon being reminded by a disciple that to smoke cigars is clearly a phallic activity, Freud, cigar in hand, is said to have responded, 'Sometimes a good cigar is just a good cigar.' The anecdote demonstrates, it seems to me, a problematic central to psychoanalysis: the discipline which insists on transference and, perhaps even more significantly, on displacement as fundamental principles, ultimately must insist in turn on seeing everything as being 'really' something else. Such an ideology of metamorphosis is so much taken for granted that unlike the rest of the world, which generally has difficulty in being convinced that a pipe, for example, is not necessarily a pipe at all, psychoanalysis needs at times to remind itself, in a type of return to *adaequatio*, that it is possible for a cigar really to *be* a cigar (1987: 1).

And on the cover of the book, under a Magritte-like cigar, is the caption: 'Ceci n'est pas un cigare'. A cigar is a cigar when you strike a match to it and smoke it. In a dream, when you dream of picking up a cigar and then have an orgasm, that cigar is not a cigar.

Yet even Freud's cigar may have been more than just a cigar; this episode is said to have taken place only a year after Freud's cancer of the mouth had been diagnosed, and in this context the cigar may well have symbolized for him death rather than sex (Gilman 1991). Moreover, the anecdote in question is highly apocryphal, and seems rather to represent secondary revision on

the part of Freudians (or even anti-Freudians) than the words of Freud himself. Whether Freud himself was ever so critical of Freudian symbolism is, on the face of it, unlikely. But the enduring popularity of the apocryphal anecdote (like the popularity of the equally apocryphal Jungian anecdote of Kékulé and the dream of the ouroboros that gave him the clue to the arrangement of the six carbon atoms in the benzene ring) tells us something worth knowing about the doubts of the post-Freudian tradition.

Not only a cigar, but even a phallus, may symbolize itself. Perhaps it would be better to say that a symbol always does symbolize something else, but that not all stories or images are symbolic. Some would argue that, at times, a dream or a myth can simply express itself, symbolizing nothing (as Shakespeare's Macbeth said of our lives: 'A tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing'). The nonsymbolic aspects of presumed symbols have long bedeviled psychoanalysts: 'As somebody (Bernfeld?) once remarked, an aeroplane is a symbol of erection, and the fact that one can also use it for going from Paris to Berlin is merely incidental' (Róheim 1970: 156; O'Flaherty 1985: 115).

If, as Adler is said to have remarked, everything is a symbol of intercourse except intercourse, what is intercourse a symbol of? And does this pose the same sort of problem for Indian mythology that it poses for Western psychoanalysis?

One way to account for the blatancy of sexual symbols in Indian myths is simply to argue that the Hindus invented our psychiatric myths better than we did, as well as earlier. This was what Claude Lévi-Strauss argued, perversely, *against* Freud. He pointed out that there is a 'convergence between psychoanalytic and mythic thought', and, more particularly, that Freud's theory of the primeval oedipal conflict (expressed in *Totem and Taboo*; Freud 1913) was like a myth of the Jivaro, a South American Indian tribe (Lévi-Strauss 1989: 172). 'As we can see', he remarks, 'the Indians even had psychoanalysts!' And he goes on to emphasize the complete convergence of Jivaro myths and Freudian theories by remarking, tongue firmly in cheek, 'How wise are the Americans in calling psychoanalysts "head-shrinkers", thus spontaneously associating them with the Jivaro!' (Ibid.: 186).

The convergence, Lévi-Strauss argues in the same work, is evident in the founding myth of incest:

It is *Totem and Taboo* in its entirety that, well ahead of Freud, the Jivaro Indians anticipated in the myth that for them plays the part of a Genesis: societies arose when the primitive horde split into hostile clans after the murder of the father whose wife had committed incest with their son. From a psychological point of view the Jivaro myth offers an even richer and more subtle plot than *Totem and Taboo* (1989: 186).

This rather tautological and certainly unfalsifiable argument (see Doniger 1989) is somewhat reminiscent of Philip Roth's suggestion that Jews don't need Freud, so patent are their oedipal relationships with their mothers. Speaking of a boy who had hanged himself, the women friends of his mother say, 'You couldn't look for a boy more in love with his mother than Ronald!' Roth comments on this:

> I swear to you, this is not bullshit or a screen memory, these are the very words these women used. The great dark operatic themes of human suffering and passion come rolling out of those mouths like the prices of Oxydol and Del Monte canned corn! . . . No, you don't have to go digging where these people are concerned — they wear the old unconscious on their *sleeves*! (1969: 108).

Thus we can outsmart ourselves if we try to apply a hermeneutics of suspicion to material that is innocent. Discounting this argument, which would discard Freud as redundant, merely duplicating the Jivaro (and, by implication, the Hindu) texts, I would argue, on the contrary, that such texts are corroborative. But we must use them with caution.

The blatant Hindu images, which Prakash Desai has termed 'unsymbols', appear in many cultures. Thus a man in Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* so hated symbols that he kept a wheelbarrow full of the real things to point to when he wished to refer to them. And the poet Yehuda Amichai remarked, when told that Jerusalem was a symbol, that it was a symbol with a sewer system. Within the Hindu myths, 'unsymbols' do, as Freud and Lévi-Strauss pointed out, mask the meaning by fragmenting it, inverting it, obfuscating it, and obsessively repeating it, never the same. Symbols may sometimes be blank or censoring, but sometimes they simultaneously fragment and reassemble with other, related meanings. A disguise is going on here, too. But is it

disguising something besides the fear of the sexual act that is often the specific, manifest focus of the myth?

This brings us back to the second half of the syllogism, the Freudian assumption that when a symbol does hide something, what it always hides is sex. When is a phallus not a phallus? When it is a phallic symbol. This was a bone of contention between Freud and Jung for many years. As Jung wrote:

> Unfortunately, Freud's idea of sexuality is incredibly elastic and so vague that it can be made to include almost anything. . . . Take, for instance, the so-called phallic symbols which are supposed to stand for the *membrum virile* and nothing more. Psychologically speaking, the *membrum* is itself . . . an emblem of something whose wider content is not at all easy to determine (1974: 105; O'Flaherty 1985: 115–16).

The mind boggles at the thought of what *Jung* regarded as 'vague' in Freud, when he himself would only define the referent of the phallus as 'something whose wider content is not at all easy to determine'. Freud acknowledged that genital language often masked much broader issues of sexuality, itself conceived as a force that encompassed far more than genital activity. Freud also referred to a phallus as a 'simulacrum', paving the way for Lacan's distinction between the penis (as part of the body, signified) and the phallus (as a word, a signifier).

One Man's Obscenity is Another Man's Divinity

In India, what is obscene may be something else — something that is symbolized by a simple, everyday thing like a phallus. It might be something like death — for, as we shall see, a phallus or vagina is often a lethal weapon — or god. What is signified (with its symbols that signify it) in the beginning may be sex, but then it is religion that is signified (by sex and its symbols, as well as by the symbols of religion), and finally, in a kind of second naïveté, sex is signified by religion and its symbols, which is in turn signified by sex and its symbols, as well as by the symbols of religion . . . until we find ourselves in an infinite *mise en abîme*, and it is impossible to distinguish between signified and signifier. In 'unpacking' the symbolic image, one must beware of taking theology too seriously, but one must also beware of taking sexuality too seriously.

It is notoriously difficult to isolate the sexual signifiers or signifieds of sacrifices. An Upanisadic text likens the depositing of semen in the woman to the depositing of the oblation in the sacred fire, in a passage giving practical, ritual instructions for taking back the seed from a lover whom the husband hates (implying, perhaps, that there is another category not discussed here, a lover whom he does not hate . . .)

> If a man's wife has a lover whom he hates, he should spread out a row of reed arrows, their heads smeared with ghee, and sacrifice them, in inverse order, into a vessel of fire, saying, 'You have made a libation in my fire! I take away your breath, your sons, your cattle, your sacrifices and good deeds, your hope and your expectations. You have made a libation in my fire, you (Mr X).' If a Brahmin who knows this curses a man, that man dies impotent and without merit. Therefore one should not try to get on 'joking terms' with the wife of a learned Brahmin [*Brhadaranyaka Upanisad* 6.4.12; O'Flaherty 1980: 10].

Is the sacrifice itself, the pouring of butter into a pan of fire, derived from a sexual metaphor in the first place? Is this text imposing a sexual meaning on a nonsexual sacrifice, or bringing out the meaning that underlies the sacrifice in the first place?

When a friend of mine, a Catholic priest, attended a Jewish ceremony of circumcision for the first time, he was horrified to discover that they actually cut the child's penis. 'I thought it was *symbolic!*' he exclaimed, no doubt recalling his own tradition that substituted wine for the blood of Christ. But of course the circumcision *is* symbolic, not of the cutting of the child's penis (which actually happens) but of the child's initiation into the tribe of Israel. And the communion wine, on the other hand, need not be so very symbolic. When Catholic missionaries encountered the Maya in Yucatan, in the sixteenth century, they were horrified to discover that after the Maya had been converted to Christianity they adapted their former ceremonies of human sacrifice to include a *real* crucifixion (O'Flaherty 1988: 117). The Inquisition regarded this barbarism as a 'mock crucifixion', but it was in fact a *real* crucifixion, as the Mass was not. Here again, one culture's symbol is another culture's reality — and, at another level (e.g., circumcision), its symbol.

The ease with which symbols vibrate between the theological

and the sexual was delightfully demonstrated in the context of a Tantric Indian ritual that Sudhir Kakar tried to understand:

> In my own conversations with tantriks, I sometimes had the impression that they deliberately (and mischievously) used the multivalence of tantrik terminology to befuddle the perhaps too-earnest outsider. Whenever the term *ananda* came up in a text . . . and I translated it as 'supreme bliss', I was told to forget all the mystical balderdash since *ananda* was the pure and simple pleasure of intercourse. If I took the concrete meaning . . . then I was invariably chided for my literal-mindedness, since the word in that particular context just happened to stand for 'enlightenment' (1982: 156–7).

Is sex a euphemism for god? Or is god a euphemism for sex? Or both! This is the cross-cultural challenge to Freudian universalism: It may be that what is latent for us may be manifest for them, and vice versa. Can we learn from them, therefore, about our latent fantasies, or about theirs? Can we take what is manifest in their myths not only as symbolic of something latent in their culture (whatever that might be), but of something latent in ours, or, even better, of something *manifest* in ours? If we can draw parallels between the latent content of our dreams and their myths, does this imply that there are some universal latent cultural contents that arise out of universal human situations? For example, do individual members of different cultures experience their genitalia in ways similar enough (despite being differently mediated by different cultures) to inspire similar group fantasies (myths) of vulnerability and sexual mutilation? The answers to these questions can only be sought by a close examination of the myths, to which we must now turn.

Part II: The Evidence of the Myths

Preinfantile and Infantile Sexuality: Freud in Sanskrit

Indian texts speculate not only on infantile fantasies but on sexual fantasies even *before* the womb, when the soul-to-be-reborn has left its last body (that of a dying person) but has not yet entered its new body, and hence is called an 'intermediate-state-being'. As McDermott relates:

> The Oedipal character of [the Buddhist] analysis would do justice to Freud: driven by karma, the intermediate-state being goes to the

location where rebirth is to take place. Possessing the divine eye by virtue of its karma, it is able to see the place of its birth, no matter how distant. There it sees its father and mother to be, united in intercourse. Finding the scene hospitable, its passions are stirred. If male, it is smitten with desire for its mother. If female, it is seized with desire for its father. And inversely, it hates either mother or father, which it comes to regard as a rival. Concupiscence and hatred thus arise in the (unborn creature) as its driving passions. Stirred by these wrong thoughts, it attaches itself to the place where the sexual organs of the parents are united, imagining that it is there joined with the object of its passion. Taking pleasure in the impurity of the semen and blood in the womb, the (intermediate state being) establishes itself there. Thus do the (elements of matter) arise in the womb. They harden; and the intermediate-state being perishes, to be replaced immediately by the birth existence (1976: 171–2).

Thus Buddhist embryology corroborates the Freudian hypothesis that *very* young male children experience lust for the mother and antagonism toward the father. After that, it is mere child's play, as it were, to speculate on sexual fantasies *within* the womb. A passage from the *Brhaddevata* states:

> The sage Brhaspati tried to rape Mamata, the wife of his brother Utathya, when Mamata was pregnant. But the unborn embryo protected his mother by kicking out the intruding penis, shouting, 'Get out, uncle! There's only room for one in here, and I was here first!' The infuriated rapist cursed the embryo to be blind; the child was born as Dirghatamas ('Long Darkness') [4.11–15].

The myth of Dirghatamas corroborates the Freudian hypothesis that a young male child is threatened by the sexuality of the father with his mother and that the father retaliates with physical aggression against the child. The direction of the aggression, from father to son rather than from son to father, has been characterized as typically Indian (Ramanujan 1983). The aggression results in the child's mutilation — here, blinding, which, Freud hypothesized, stands for castration, through upward displacement. We will return to other examples of upward displacement in Hindu myths.

There are many other Hindu stories about the sexuality not of embryos but of very young children. In one variant of the myth of Brahma's incest with his daughter, the daughter desires her father as he desires her; then, to purify herself, she immolates

herself in a fire and obtains the boon that she will be reborn as Arundhati, the epitome of the chaste wife, that her husband will be merely a 'close friend' to her, and, finally, that any man who looks upon her with desire will become impotent. Moreover, she officially establishes the moral law that creatures before adolescence will not be subject to desire (*Siva Purana* 2.2.5–7, O'Flaherty 1973: 64–5, 118–19; 1980: 105). Arundhati extricates herself from the immediate situation by being reborn as a child, and moreover, as a child explicitly protected from any possibility of the infant sexuality from which she has suffered in such a blatant way. In addition to this, she protects herself by defusing her potential aggressors, not by turning them into children but by the equivalent (albeit more drastic) measure of unmanning them. In discussing this myth, Sudhir Kakar comments (1978) on 'the castration fantasy of turning all men into eunuchs in the Arundhati myth' (p. 90) and on the daughter's 'fantasied erotic wishes toward her father, and her later repudiation of these wishes by transforming them into their opposite, aloofness and chastity' (p. 69).

The question of the justice of childhood guilt is explicitly challenged in the great Sanskrit epic, the *Mahabharata*. In this story, a sage named Mandavya is wrongly supposed to have participated in a robbery and is impaled on a stake. But this is not the end of him:

> The Brahmin seer remained on the stake for a long time. Though he had no food, he did not die. He held fast to his vital breaths and summoned together the seers. . . . He said to the ascetics, 'Whom can I blame? For no one but me is guilty'. The king had him taken down from the stake. But since he was unable to pull the stake out of him, he cut it off at its base. And so the sage went about with the stake still inside him. As he moved around with the stake in his neck, ribs, and entrails, he started to think, 'The stake could be used as a pole to carry flower baskets'. By means of this asceticism he conquered worlds that were hard for other people to conquer; and people used to call him, 'Tip-of-the-stake Mandavya'.
>
> Then the Brahmin . . . scolded [Dharma, the moral law incarnate], saying, 'What *was* the bad deed that I did, without knowing what I had done, a deed which has earned me such a fruit of retribution?' . . . Dharma said, 'You stuck blades of grass up the tails of little butterflies, and this is the fruit that you have obtained from

that karma, ascetic'. Tip-of-the-stake Mandavya said, '*When* did I do this? Tell me the truth'. To this question the king of dharma replied, 'You did it when you were a child'.

Then Tip-of-the-stake Mandavya said, 'For a rather small offence you have given me an enormous punishment. . . . I will establish a moral boundary for the fruition of dharma in the world: no sin will be counted against anyone until the age of fourteen . . . ' (*Mahabharata* 1.101; O'Flaherty 1990: 51–3; Goldman 1985).

We may see masked sexual symbolism in the impalement (a homosexual violation) and the cutting off of the long stake (a castration), though we should also notice what the Indian tradition makes of this episode: In a kind of reverse castration, Mandavya feels that he has *gained* something, has been given a stake that, however shortened, he still seems to regard as an extension of himself, a useful superpenis, as it were. The childhood guilt that inspired the episode of anal intercourse gives way to the fantasy of the large penis of the grown man.

The Fatal Phallus of Indra

This fantasy of the parental penis is glorified in a cycle of stories about Indra, the king of the gods, beginning in a text composed in 900 BC that rivals anything ever written by the Marquis de Sade. It is the earliest (and most extreme) example that I know of the myth of the *vagina dentata*, and in a starkly oedipal situation. It exemplifies a blatant oedipal conflict and vivid, repeated instances of upward displacement of sexual mutilation, from the genitals to the head. The story has three episodes, which tell how Indra's son Kutsa (consciously or unconsciously) impersonates Indra in order to sleep with Indra's wife, Kutsa's mother; how Indra sends his grandson in his place to seduce and destroy a dangerous woman with multiple sexual organs; and how Indra impersonates another man in order to sleep with that man's wife, and is therefore cursed with multiple sexual organs.

Here is the first episode:

> Kutsa Aurava ('Thigh-Born' [as we would say, 'Sprung of his loins']) was made out of the two thighs of Indra. Just as Indra was, so was he, precisely as one would be who is made out of his own self. Indra made him his charioteer. He caught him with his wife, and when he asked her, 'How could you do this?' she replied, 'I could not tell the

> two of you apart'. Indra made Kutsa bald; but Kutsa wrapped a turban around his head and went to her; still she could not tell them apart and again Indra caught her with Kutsa. Then Indra bound Kutsa and made him a wrestler (*Jaiminiya Brahmana* 3.199–200; O'Flaherty 1985: 74–5).

The myth implies that Kutsa plays upon his physical resemblance to impersonate Indra; rather, that is the justification that Indra's wife gives for sleeping with Kutsa as well as with Indra. Making Kutsa bald deprives him of the hair that is so often a symbol of semen, the seed in the head, through upward displacement. The oedipal implications of the result of the physical resemblance of father and son need not be labored. Thus the story of Indra and Kutsa enacts the fantasy of incest, and the fear and guilt of its ultimate punishment.

The second myth in this sequence is about Indra and a son of Kutsa, a story as blatant about the physical sexual act as the first episode was blatant about the oedipal conflict:

> Long-tongue was a demoness who used to lick up the oblations with her long tongue. Indra sent the son of Kutsa to seduce her. But Long-tongue turned him down, pointing out, 'You have just one penis, but I have "mice" on every limb, on this limb and on that limb. This won't work'. When Indra gave him penises on every limb, he succeeded in seducing the demoness. They lay together. As soon as he had his way with her, he remained firmly stuck in her. He summoned Indra, who ran against her and struck her down with his thunderbolt and killed her (*Jaiminiya Brahmana* 1.161–3; O'Flaherty 1984: 102–3).

The woman in this myth is a grotesque nightmare image of the devouring sexual woman; her excessive sexual organs are referred to euphemistically (which is unusual in Sanskrit mythology, which usually calls a spade a spade, and a vagina a *yoni*) as 'mice'. But in Sanskrit, 'mice', in the dual, is sometimes used to designate the two testicles of a man. Thus Long-tongue is a 'male' woman, the woman with a phallus (Róheim 1945). The long tongue with which Long-tongue licks up the oblation is a phallus; but it is also the organ of language (*langue* in French, or 'tongue' in English, meaning both 'a part of the mouth' and 'language'). So, too, the phallus itself, as Lacan tells us, is a word, a 'tongue' in the second sense of the word. Long-tongue's excessive vaginas

provide a precedent not only for the (female) *vagina dentata* of several demonic figures in Hindu mythology (*Skanda Purana* 1.2.27–9; O'Flaherty 1975: 252–61) but also for the (male) long tongue of Kali (who is thus depicted on many icons).

In another variant of this myth, Indra himself is said to have penises on every limb — another way in which he is 'indistinguishable' from his grandson and son (*Kausitaki Brahmana*, 23.7.5–12). But in later mythology, Indra has not multiple penises but multiple vaginas, and he gets them, in the final episode in this cycle, when he assumes the form of a certain sage in order to commit adultery with the sage's wife: when the sage catches him, he curses Indra to have a thousand vaginas on his body (which literally emasculates him, or at least enfeminizes him, and may therefore be roughly equivalent to a castration). Later, this curse is modified and reduced to merely having a thousand eyes on his body, a stunning example of upward displacement (*Kathasaritsagara* 17.137–48). But in other variants of the myth, Indra is actually castrated (and later restored with the testicles of a ram) (*Ramayana* 1.47.15–31). Indeed, in one variant of the story, from the *Padma Purana*, Indra gets the vaginas *and* the eyes *and* the castration:

> Gautama cursed Indra, saying, 'Since you have acted in this way for the sake of the female sexual organ, let there be a thousand of them on your body, and let your penis (*lingam*) fall'. Then Indra praised the goddess in her aspect of Indraksi ('Eyes of Indra'), and she said, 'I cannot destroy the evil created by a sage's curse, but I can do something so that people will not notice it: you will have a thousand eyes in the middle of the female organs, and you will have the testicles of a ram' (1.56.15–53).

Looking at the history of the story, we can see that the myth that changes Indra's vaginas into eyes is reversing the course of time; in fact, Indra (like several other Vedic gods) was originally said to have thousands of eyes (*Rig Veda* 1.23.3, 10.90.1, 10.81.3). This was then the source of a myth that gave him (through downward displacement?) first thousands of penises and, finally, thousands of vaginas that were later turned (back) into eyes. Nor is this a single, perverse image; it is a famous story, that is even satirized in a Sanskrit farce (Ksemendra, *Desopadesa*), in which a whore says, 'I wish I had as many vaginas

(*bhagas*) as Indra; I could make a thousand times as much money as I'm making now'.

The Archetypal Phallus of Siva

But when Indra's thousand eyes are turned into vaginas, and then again into eyes, what is the foreground and what is the background? For Hindus, the phallus in the background, the archetype (if I may use the word in its Eliadean, indeed Bastianian, and non-Jungian sense) of which their own penises are manifestations, is the phallus (called the *lingam*) of the god Siva, who inherits much of the mythology of Indra (O'Flaherty 1973). The *lingam* appeared, separate from the body of Siva, on several occasions: At the time of creation, the flame *lingam* arose out of the waters of chaos, stretching up to the sky and down to the bottom of hell, infinite in both directions; then Siva himself tore it off his body when he was disillusioned with human creation; finally, the sages in the Pine Forest castrated Siva and caused his *lingam* to fall to the ground when he had seduced their wives. On each of these occasions, Siva's wrath was appeased when gods and humans promised to worship his *lingam* forever after, which, in India, they still do.

Indeed, certain texts, like the *Skanda Purana* (8.18–19), argue that all human beings are naturally designed to be the worshippers of Siva and his wife Parvati; the clear proof of this is the fact that all men have the *lingam*, and all women the *pinda* (the vagina, the image of Parvati). But the manifestation itself may sometimes be understood only in terms of the archetype. As related by Gupta, the great Vedantic sage Ramakrishna described what he called his madness: 'When I experienced that divine madness, I used to worship my own sex-organ as the Siva-phallus' (1980: 491). The archetypal *lingam* reappears in Paul Scott's *Staying On*. Mr Bhoolabhoy, an Indian Christian, deplores the near certainty that he is about to make love once more to his horrid wife:

> 'Indeed I am lost', he thought. 'She will make me do it. I am not a Christian at all. I am a Hindu and she is my goddess. Every orgasm is an offering to her, and every erection is a manifestation in me of *Shiva-lingam*.' He shut his eyes so that he could not see his idol. He tried to conjure a different image. It would not come (1977: 243).

Thus the archetypal Hindu image casts its inexorable siren spell on the would-be convert.

In a short story by the contemporary Marathi writer Vilas Sarang (1990), the hero is transformed, not into a cockroach or a nose, in the manner of Kafka or Gogol, but into an appropriately Hindu variant. The story begins: 'I awoke one morning from strange dreams and found myself transformed in my bed into an erect phallus. My head was round and smooth, with a small slit at the top. Completely hairless, it rested upon the pillow, while the rest of my straight, round body stretched out on the bed beneath the covers' (p. 99). His girlfriend screamed and ran away (though her friends in the dormitory remarked, 'O my God, what a prick!' 'Man, so big!' 'Latika, where did you find such a big one?'), and he eventually hopped out of the city to the countryside. There the villagers decided that he was 'The *lingam* of Shiva', a 'self-created', natural *lingam*. They built a hut for him, worshiped him with flowers, and prayed to him. He spoke to them and told them his myths, beginning with the story of his creation as part of the body of Siva. The people continued to worship him, and one woman in particular, Rakhmabai, massaged him at night: 'I [] became more and more excited, so that in the end I was possessed with a wild desire to send a burning jet of semen leaping from my mouth. But I knew that couldn't be. All that would emerge from my mouth would be words, words, words' (p. 108). Rakhmabai, who was childless, begged him for a drop of his seed, but he replied, 'It will be possible only when I am reunited with Lord Shiva'. Indeed, this became an obsession with him:

> Yet I felt a certain sadness. It was not a good thing that Lord Shiva broke off his *lingam* and threw it away. Without doubt, the chaos that was now the hallmark of life on earth was the result of Lord Shiva's wrathful act. If I could be reunited with my lord, peace and love would prevail upon the earth. When would that be? When would I rejoin my lord? (Ibid.: 108).

He ceased to speak to his devotees, and became depressed. 'And then, one night, I suddenly underwent another transformation; I lost my state of erection, and collapsed limply to the floor. I, who was over five feet tall, was now reduced to two feet' (p. 109). Rakhmabai carried him away, at his request:

> She held me in her arms like a child, and stepped out of the temple. After walking a long way in the dark, she placed me on a large rock in a deserted spot. She tore off a large stretch of cloth from the end of her sari and wrapped me in it; thus she protected me from ants and crows and other creatures of the wild (Ibid.: 109).

Grafted onto the hilarious and obscene Kafkaesque fantasy is a Hindu myth that leads to a strange conflation of sexual and theological despair. The penis is first severed from the father, then detumesces into impotence, and is finally abandoned by the mother — the failed mother, who leaves him among wild animals, like so many mutilated heroes (including Oedipus).

Oedipus and Krsna

If Siva is the castrated father and Indra is the unhappy oedipal father, Krsna is the happy oedipal child. Indeed, there is a notorious battle between Krsna and Indra in the first book of the *Mahabharata*, in which Indra tries, in vain, to rain on the parade (more precisely, the forest fire) that Krsna has ignited; Indra floods it with showers of the rain that is his semen, but Krsna picks up a great mountain and shuts out the rain. Krsna's adventures begin like those of Moses and Jesus and Oedipus and other heroes (Dundes 1990): his uncle, Kamsa, the king, tries to kill him, and Krsna is raised, among animals, by foster parents who are cowherds. In the early mythology of Krsna, the cowherd women (Gopis) are at once maternal and erotic in their relationship with him; they function simultaneously as his nurses and his lovers (Masson 1974; see also Goldman 1978; Ramanujan 1983). But as the myth of Krsna and the Gopis develops in late medieval times, Hindus begin to feel uncomfortable with the merging of the female roles of nurse and mistress in the Gopis. And as both the erotic and the maternal aspects of the Gopis become heightened and exaggerated, the erotic aspect is expressed in the image of the lethal whore and the maternal aspect in the image of the nurturing Madonna of the Freudian paradigm.

Let us look at two examples of this dichotomy, beginning with the paradigmatic evil wet nurse, the demoness Putana:

> The horrible Putana ('stinking'), a devourer of children, was sent by Kamsa to kill his nephew, Krsna. She wandered through cities, villages, and pastures, killing infants. One day she came to Krsna's

village, and by her magic powers she assumed the form of a beautiful woman. She saw the infant Krsna there on the bed. Though he kept his eyes closed, he still knew that she was an ogress who killed children. She whose wicked heart was concealed by sweet actions like a sharp sword encased in a scabbard, took him onto her lap, as one might pick up a sleeping deadly viper, mistaking it for a rope. Krsna's mother was overcome by her splendor, and, thinking her to be a good woman, stood looking on.

> Then Putana took the baby on her lap and gave him her breast, which had been smeared with a virulent poison. But Krsna, pressing her breast hard with his hands, angrily drank out her life's breath with the milk. The ogress, with agonizing pain in her breasts, opened her mouth, stretched out her arms and legs, tore her hair, and fell lifeless on the ground. Then she resumed her true form. Her mouth was full of terrible teeth as large as plough-shafts (*Bhagavata Purana* 10.6.1–20, 30–44; O'Flaherty 1975: 214–15).

Putana's outer form, which gives milk, appears to be maternal, beautiful, divine, and nourishing, but her true inner form, which gives poison, is nonmaternal, hideous, demonic, and devouring. It is worth noting that the child, as well as the ogress, has a sweet exterior and a violent inner nature, and that the mother, by being taken in by the masquerade, exposes her son to the danger and can be said to be indirectly responsible. Even the good mother is not really a good mother.

During the same historical period when Putana came to symbolize the fatal dichotomy between the Madonna and the whore, one particular cowherd woman, Radha, took on the role of erotic partner, without entirely relinquishing her older role as wet nurse. As Hindus became increasingly uncomfortable about this combination, Krsna himself split into two, most dramatically, in a variant of the myth told in Bengal:

> One day Krsna's father gave the infant Krsna to Radha to care for; Radha was at the peak of her full voluptuous beauty. She took the child and carried him away; passionately excited, she embraced and kissed him again and again. Then, through Krsna's power of illusion, suddenly the baby vanished from her lap, and she saw instead a handsome, dark blue youth in the prime of life. They made love passionately, indulging in every sort of love-play; but suddenly Krsna ceased to be a youth and became an infant again. Deeply disappointed, Radha handed the baby back to his father (*Brahmavaivarta Purana* 4.15.1–181; O'Flaherty 1980: 103).

Radha is required to fulfill two roles — nurse and mistress — that she herself feels to be incompatible (for the text stresses her unwillingness to play the role of nurse). This tension leads her to fantasize that the troublesome infant becomes a handsome lover, and because the infant happens to be the lord Krsna, he is able to use his own power of illusion to fulfill her fantasy. Thus she is able to integrate her own dual nature by splitting into two the object of both of her female roles. In this way, the deus ex machina allows the Hindu myth to fantasize a happy solution to the potentially destructive conflation of the maternal and the erotic. But even in the myth this solution cannot last forever; the reality principle reasserts itself, and Radha is left holding the baby — until his father takes him back.

A more thoroughly satisfying oedipal encounter is attributed to the son of Krsna, named Pradyumna:

> When Pradyumna was six days old, he was stolen by a demon who threw him into the ocean. There he was swallowed by a large fish, which was caught and brought to the demon's palace. Now, the demon's wife supervised all the cooking, and when the fish's belly was cut open, she saw inside it a magnificent young boy. As she wondered who he was and how he had come to be inside the belly of a fish, a sage told her the story of the child's birth. She took care of the boy, and she was so deluded by his extraordinary beauty that she came to love him passionately even when he was still a child. When he came to young manhood, she taught him all the magic that she had. But when the boy realized how ardently attached to him she was, he said, 'Why are you acting like this, instead of acting like a mother?' Then she said to him, 'You are not my son; that terrible demon stole you from your father, Krsna, and threw you into the ocean, where a fish swallowed you. I took you out of the fish's belly, but your own mother is still weeping for you.' Pradyumna eventually killed the demon and married the demon's wife (*Visnu Purana* 5.27.1–31; O'Flaherty 1984: 99–100).

This is still in essence the 'family romance' that Freud wrote about. Several versions of the story express the woman's qualms; one version creates yet another double, a wet nurse, to spare the demon's wife the awkwardness of being both mistress and nurse, and in another the demon catches his wife and Pradyumna *in flagrante delicto* and says to her, 'You crazy whore, have you lost your mind, making love with your son?' But, unlike the

Sophocles/Freud variant, this is a truly satisfying fantasy: 'I can have sex with my mother because she turns out not to be my mother.'

Part III: The Conclusion

The Happy Ending

The story of Pradyumna is, I would argue, a clearer window into the subconscious than the most obvious Western parallel, Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*. Sophocles' Oedipus myth is not the best example of suppressed oedipal longings; it accounts only for self-deception ('I didn't know it was my mother'; recall the lame argument of the mother of Kutsa: 'I couldn't tell the difference; I thought it was my husband, not my son'). In so doing, it masks and diffuses the guilt of a conscious violation of a sexual taboo. As Sophocles himself has Oedipus say in the sequel, *Oedipus at Colonus*, if someone was trying to kill you, would you first ask him if he was your father, or would you attack? (lines 991–4). The Hindu story of the son of Krsna and the demon's wife is a much more convincing wish-fulfillment: The boy thinks it *is* his mother and is enormously relieved to discover it isn't. In a way, one might say that the tale of Pradyumna provides a happy ending for Sophocles' tragedy, that it cleans it all up and makes it come out nicely. This is *Oedipus Rex* as it might have been retold by Melina Mercouri in the film *Never On Sunday*, in which she plays a whore in the Athenian port of Piraeus who gives all the Greek tragedies a happy ending: everyone goes to the seashore.

Indeed, one major respect in which Hindu myths differ from Freudian stories is the fact that Hindu myths (though not Hindu epics), by and large, have happy endings. There is no real tragedy, perhaps because rebirth always gives you a second chance; it doesn't end with death. Or because of the twist of illusion: It really didn't happen; it really doesn't matter. The myth makes the listener feel better by releasing all the worst fears of his or her own psyche, showing that even these fears can be transcended if you understand rightly. Moreover, taken in their *own* context, the threatening materials embedded deep in the Hindu myths are made distant and safe to talk about by being told in ritual

contexts or group readings, as they almost always are, deflecting their impact from the individual to the group. The dream becomes safe when it becomes a myth, and the culture as a whole can diffuse and disperse the terror. This may be one reason why sexual fears that are masked in dreams may appear so blatantly in myths: Once the power of the fear has been displaced onto the group as a whole, it is no longer necessary to displace it by burying it (making it 'latent') in manifest symbols. Thus Hindus, too, have discovered *The Uses of Enchantment* (Bettelheim 1977). To this extent, the Hindu myths might well be taken as evidence in support of Freud's argument that all dreams, even apparent nightmares, are wish-fulfillments. Or, rather, we might say that the myth represents the wish-fulfillment of a dream (Steinberg 1991).

But even when the story actually ends with all wrongs righted, all wounds healed, the amount of wrongs and wounds depicted along the long, long road to the happy ending leaves a Western reader with a bitter aftertaste of tragedy. It may be that the happy ending in Hindu myths is made possible by a kind of denial that removes the latent content. Many of these stories are embedded in texts describing rituals guaranteed to procure immortality for the ritualist, or myths guaranteed to procure immortality for the listener. What is repressed in these tales of blatant sexuality may be the knowledge that the ritual will fail, that even if you listen to the myth you will die. What is repressed may be the denial of the denial of death.

Thus the Hindu myths are, on one hand, less censored than ours in certain areas that make possible the open expression of sexual violence and the violation of sexual taboos, but are, on the other hand, perhaps more censored in the area of certain denials, such as the denial of death, that make possible the happy ending. For, as Freud taught us, there is no happy ending.

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13

Sati: A Nineteenth-Century Tale of Women, Violence and Protest

Ashis Nandy

Authority and Defiance

There are superstitions, and superstitions about superstitions. For over 150 years, the legal abolition in 1829 of sati, the Hindu rite of widows committing suicide after the death of their husbands, has been considered the first victory of the modern world over Hindu obscurantism and primitivism. I contend in this essay that the epidemic of sati in the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-centuries was mainly a product of British colonial intrusion into Indian society; that the popularity of the rite and its abolition in response to a reform movement were two phases in Indian society's attempt to cope with large-scale environmental and cultural changes; and that both these changes involved the invalidation and distortion of traditional attitudes to woman and femininity. I also contend that Rammohun Roy (1772–1833), who led the movement against the rite and partly on that ground is known as the father of modern India, represented society's attempt to work through its ambivalences towards the rite, towards traditional concepts of womanhood and women, and towards the sexual identities the colonial culture was helping to crystallize.

This alternative interpretation of sati assumes that to walk the razor's edge between makeshift adjustments and total surrender

to its changing environment, a civilization constantly needs to generate new concepts, symbols and structures of authority and to renegotiate terms with its older gods. It is this social need which defines the importance of the person who evolves new sources of legitimacy and designs alternative controls of transgression, and yet makes his innovations reflect the unique history and genius of his people. If society helps such a person to take care of his private conflicts, gives him the chance to relate his world view to the needs of his contemporaries, and appreciates his interpretation of traditions as authoritative, a creative anastomosis between man and society is established. Social change then comes to mean not only changes in rites, rituals and practices, but also a changed relationship between cultural symbols and individual motives.

Starting from such an assumption I shall explore in this essay the relationship between the reform of sati and the world of Rammohun Roy to illustrate how a person's private conflicts with the immediate authorities can get intertwined with aggregate responses to public issues, how older controls of transgression can become a threat and a challenge to the person, and how a person's personal ethics and private symbols can become valid tools of social intervention. I shall do so in two stages. First, I shall examine the culture of sati in historical and psychological terms and show how the ritual became a battleground between the old and the new, the indigenous and the imported, and the Brahmanic and the folk. I shall try to show that these three intersecting conflicts were given meaning by the central conflict between traditional concepts of womanhood and the emerging man-nature system, political authority and social organization. In the second stage I shall try to show how Rammohun Roy subverted the rite of sati by introducing his society to alternative symbols of authority which constituted not merely the first serious reinterpretation of Hinduism in modern times, but also carried the intimations of a new life-style and new principles of masculinity and femininity more compatible with the large-scale industrial, social and economic changes then taking place in Indian society.[1]

To sharpen the analysis, I shall avoid details of the history of the reform and Rammohun's public and private lives. Instead, I shall emphasize only some lesser known aspects of Roy's early

interpersonal experiences which provide important clues to his theory of reform and to the 'inner' meaning for him of the crises of his people and his time. It was this meaning which influenced Roy's private responses to the older symbols of authority involved in the rite of sati, and his public struggle to introduce new authority symbols more congruent with the emerging psychological and cultural realities in his community. To the extent he succeeded in his historical role, it was again this meaning which cut across numerous levels and sectors of human behaviour, offsetting private history against collective self-definition and personal synthesis against a diffused collective response to environmental change.

The Logic of a Ritual

Sati, literally a virtuous wife, was the practice of widows burning themselves on the funeral pyres of their husbands (though sometimes the wives took poison or were buried alive). The rite had been prevalent among upper-caste Indians for at least two thousand years without ever becoming a standard practice.

It is not clear when and how the rite first gained a place in Indian culture. A number of studies show that widow remarriage was definitely sanctioned by ancient Hindu laws and the most venerated sacred texts were, if not actually hostile, certainly not well-disposed towards sati. The earlier law-givers, such as Manu and Yajnavalkya, had only recommended a chaste life for widows; others, such as Kautilya, allowed widows to remarry under certain circumstances. It was in the second or third century AD that sati was first recommended in *Vishnu Dharma Samhita* and it was in medieval India that the rite began to gain a new legitimacy.[2] At that time, in some small areas of the country ruled by Hindu princelings and under military, political and social pressures from the Muslim rulers of India, sati became frequent and sometimes even broke out as an epidemic. There are many popular stories about how courageous Hindu widows in the middle ages committed *jauhar* or mass sati after the death of their husbands in battle. However, there is also evidence that it was not entirely a matter of courage. Contrary to folklore, even in *jauhar* there was a strong element of compulsion.

Many reasons for the gradual legitimization of the rite are

mentioned: deliberate mistranslation of the sacred texts by the Brahmans; the difficulty of protecting women in times of war, particularly in the middle ages; the decline of Buddhism and its rationalist-pacifist influence; contact with some tribal and other cognate cultures which believed that the comfort of a dead man in his after-life could be ensured by burying with him his wives, jewellery, slaves and other favourite possessions.[3] Whatever be the reasons, the popularity of sati declined again after the middle ages. We know that by the seventeenth century the practice had become mainly voluntary and took place generally during times of war when it became difficult to protect women. In fact, by the beginning of the eighteenth century it had become a rare occurrence.

It was only towards the end of the eighteenth century and in Bengal that the rite suddenly came to acquire the popularity of a legitimate orgy.[4] Soon widows were being drugged, tied to the bodies of their dead husbands, and forced down with bamboo sticks on the burning pyres. And, this time, the practice mobilized support from many more areas of social life. For instance, on the cultural plane, the burning was invariably preceded by Kali puja and, otherwise, too, had distinctly Shakta features.[5] Again, on the political plane, the lack of self-confidence of the British colonial power and its social non-interventionism during the first phase of the Raj seemed for many a direct endorsement of the practice. In other words, to understand the reform of sati, one must first understand the gestalt of the cultural and institutional factors which might have helped popularize sati in a given region at a given time.

Let me argue the economic historian's case first. There is no doubt that the rite was partly a primitive Malthusian means of population control in famine-ridden Bengal. Previously, high mortality rates and the prohibition of widow remarriage had helped society to limit the number of mothers to below the level of available fertile women. However, in times of scarcity, these controls became inadequate and, in times of anomia, widows at certain levels of consciousness seemed useless drags on resources — particularly amongst the upper and middle classes in which women played no direct and manifest economic role.

Eighteenth-century Bengal had both the scarcity and the anomia. After about 150 years of relatively famine-free existence,

from 1770 onwards and at short intervals, large-scale scarcities challenged the traditional Bengali concept of benevolent mother deities presiding over a benevolent nature. In 1770 alone about two-fifths of all Bengalis died in a famine; most of these famines were also accompanied by major epidemics. Anomia too was widespread in the expanding urban world of Greater Calcutta, particularly among the upper caste Bengali gentry, the Bhadralok. The colonial system had generated in them a sense of rudderlessness by forcing them to maintain their traditional social dominance on almost entirely new grounds.[6] For example, the new land settlement system was displacing the landed Bhadralok aristocracy with a group of Bhadralok who had defied their caste identity to enter commerce — a profession which in Bengal was typical of the lower castes. These new landlords were merely investing in land the money they had earned from business in the cities, and they derived social status not from traditional social relations, but from British patronage. As if this was not enough, both groups of Bhadraloks found that the fast pace of monetization, by eroding caste obligations, was depriving them of the historical allegiance of artisans, the service castes and the peasantry. The various caste groups now had to work increasingly within the framework of impersonal, contractual, social relations.[7] Finally, though the new system favoured Brahmanic skills for the growing tertiary sector, for the upper castes this became a competitively acquired advantage rather than an inherited asset.

So while constituting about 11 per cent of the population of Bengali Hindus, the upper castes accounted for about 55 per cent of the cases of sati, whereas the lower castes, constituting 89 per cent of Bengali Hindus, contributed about 45 per cent of the victims. This 45 per cent came mainly from the upwardly mobile, Sanskritizing sectors of the lower castes.[8] In other words, the rite was becoming popular not among the rural poor or the small peasantry, but amongst the urban *nouveaux riches* who had lost part of their allegiance to older norms and had no alternative commitments with which to fill the void.

In their simple way some Christian missionaries at the time did relate the growing anomia amongst the elite to the spread of sati. Though they also linked sati to Hindu orthodoxy, the missionaries never lost sight of the class background of sati. Marshman, for instance, felt that 'the increasing luxury of the high and middling

classes, . . . and their expensive imitation of European habits' made them eager to avoid the cost of maintaining widows.[9] Rammohun Roy, too, considered economic gain to be a crucial explanation of the rite.[10]

Secondly, sati helped manipulate the distribution of property in a society that had rigid property rules. Under the *dayabhaga* system of Hindu law operating only in Bengal and some parts of eastern India, the right to property did not arise at the birth of a male co-sharer, but on religious efficacy. Also, a son had the right to separate or dispose of his property before partition and a widow succeeded to her husband's property on his death without a male issue even if the family was undivided.[11] This relatively liberal attitude to women in Bengal was mainly derived from the region's institutional flexibility, its non-Brahmanic (mainly tribal and Buddhist) traditions and the greater emphasis which the regional culture placed on the feminine principle in the godhead.[12] All this gave women a legitimate right to property as wives as well as mothers who could influence the decision of their children-copartners. But these were dangerous privileges to have in a culture where survival was not easy and where there was a high chance that a widow would inherit property or use it for bargaining purposes within the family. Inducing her to commit suicide was an efficient way of checking this.[13]

Thirdly, in families seduced away from the path of traditional virtue by the new colonial culture, sati became a means of securing social status and renown for virtue. We have already noted that the rite enjoyed some popularity among the upwardly mobile sectors of Bengali society and that they found in sati a new means of Sanskritization. Important parts of urban Bengal accepted this new means as legitimate: even when the family of the suicide was prosecuted, there was no loss of caste, infamy or disgrace; the family in fact gained in social stature and were 'backed with applause and honour'.[14] The duress exerted on the prospective sati was seen as a test of the piety of a family. Taking advantage of this social sanction, the practitioners of the rite were most ruthless with the widow who, after making the fatal decision to commit sati, later wavered.

A part of the status acquired through sati attached to the suicide herself. This was a powerful incentive in a society where humiliation and bullying were generally the widow's lot. Economic

freedom for her was virtually out of the question; it could be bought only through prostitution or other such extra-social ventures. In addition, there were taboos on her attendance at festive and religious occasions and severe restrictions on food, decorative dress and adornment. Thus, the sheer misery of a widow's life partly negated the prospective suicide's fear of death. Such a future seemed even worse because of childhood prejudices and fantasies about the widow being a bad omen and an evil presence.

Fourthly, a large number of Bengali Brahmans *did* claim sacred sanctions for sati; indeed, sati was seen by many observers of Indian society as a conspiracy of Brahmans.[15] It went unnoticed by most of these observers that the Bengali Brahmans, unlike Brahmans in some other parts of India, were not merely religious leaders and interpreters of texts, traditions and rites but major landholders and financiers who were increasingly co-opted by the colonial system. Also, they were the caste most exposed to Westernization and the growing conflict between the old and the new.[16] As already noted, in the new set-up many had to maintain their traditional status on the grounds of a new set of values and not on the grounds of their older, more internally consistent, life-style. As a result, material and status gains were often associated with moral anxiety and some free-floating rage at adaptive problems. And they began to see all restrictions on ritualized expression of these feelings as further threats to their life-style. The opposition to sati constituted such a threat for them. In their desperate defence of the rite they were also trying to defend their traditional self-esteem and self-definition.[17]

But underlying these causes of sati were other causes, even less amenable to conscious control and less accessible to contemporary consciousness. It is with these that this analysis is mainly concerned.

First, to reword in psychological terms what we have already said, the rite became popular in groups made psychologically marginal by their exposure to Western impact. These groups felt the pressure to demonstrate, to others as well as to themselves, their ritual purity and allegiance to traditional high culture. To many sati became an important proof of conformity to older norms at a time when these norms had become shaky within.[18] Nineteenth-century policy-makers, chroniclers and social analysts

sensed this. For instance, the first Governor General of British India, Warren Hastings, attributed the increase in sati in 1821 'to the fanatic spirit roused by the divided state of feeling among the Hindus'.[19] And Collet, too, in saying that the rite was prevalent among passive people and not among the 'bold and manly' type,[20] indirectly draws attention to the difference between the exposed easterners, feeling increasingly impotent ritually, and the unexposed northern and western parts of India, still mainly outside the areas of direct British rule and yet undisturbed in their traditional life-style. Others also noticed that there had been only one instance of the wife of a dead Indian soldier of the colonial army committing sati,[21] and that the incidence of sati was highest in the urban areas, among high and upwardly mobile castes, and in areas more exposed to Western impact.[22] In other words, sati may have involved Hindu traditions, but it was not a manifestation of hard-core Hindu orthodoxy.

Secondly, sati expressed the culture's deepest fears of — and hatred towards — woman and womanhood. The earliest available myth about sati speaks of a Rajput wife who poisoned her husband. From this 'crime', Diodorus Siculus said in 314 BC, the 'institution took its rise'.[23] One does not know how popular the myth has been in different periods of history and in different parts of India but it does summarize the intense fears of aggression and annihilation and deep longings for nurture and benevolent mothering that had always been associated with Indian, and particularly Bengali concepts of womanhood.

As in most peasant cultures, the dominant image of authority in the peasant cosmology of Bengal had always been feminine. It was that of a mother goddess who was the original or basic power, *Adyashakti*, and the ultimate principle of nature and activity, *Prakriti*. The personification of this principle was Chandi the traditional goddess of the region. Though apparently associated with only the Shakti cult, a cult in turn associated with the elite castes in Bengal, the mother goddess constituted the basic irreducible elements in Bengali cosmology.[24]

One of the most striking features of the rise in the popularity of sati was that it coincided with a gradual bifurcation of the Chandi image. Why did this coincidence occur? Why was the bifurcation necessary at that point of time? Perhaps frequent natural calamities and the new colonial culture, which constantly

invalidated the older assumptions of living, created the need for a new psycho-ecological balance in which the aggressive aspect of cosmic motherhood would be better recognized. Perhaps some crucial sections of Bengali society had lost faith in the sustaining feminine principle in the environment and, in reaction, built a more powerful symbol of womanly betrayal, punishment and rage.[25]

In any case, by the end of the eighteenth century, the sacred authority image of Bengal came to be clearly defined by two co-ordinates: Durga, the demon-killing protective mother as well as the giver of food and nurture, and Kali, the unpredictable, punitive mother, till then the goddess of a few marginal groups like dacoits, thieves, thugs, prostitutes and now — increasingly and revealingly — of the exposed elites and quasi-elites of greater Calcutta, the babus.[26] Durga, an unknown goddess only a few decades earlier, now became the most popular deity and made Durga Puja the most popular religious and social festival of the region. Kali became the new symbol of a treacherous cosmic mother, eager to betray and prone to aggression. She also came to be associated with almost all the other major rituals generally cited as instances of the cultural decadence of the age, and against each of which Rammohun Roy and almost every other reformer of the region fought.

It was this new psychological environment which mothered the folk theory of sati that the husband's death was due to the wife's poor ritual performance and was her self-created fate. The theory imputed that the wife brought about the death of the man under her protection, by her weak ritual potency and by deliberately not using or failing to maintain her latent womanly ability to manipulate natural events and fate.[27] An important part of the cultural identity of women in India had always been the mythological figure of Savitri, the wife who through her tenacious piety brought her husband back from death. It was this identity which widows seemed to defy. All widows consequently seemed to be failures in propitiation and instances of homicidal wishes magically coming true.

This demonology was associated with two major rationalizations of the rite. The first was expressed in the fear that, without the authoritarian control of the husband, the widow would stray from the path of virtue; the second in the imputation that women

were virtuous only because of external rewards and punishments and not because they had internalized social norms. The non-temporary pro-sati literature repeatedly mentions the frailty of women, their 'subjection to passion', lack of understanding and quarrelsomeness, and their 'want of virtuous knowledge'. All three allegedly made them untrustworthy and fickle.[28]

Sati was therefore an enforced penance, a death penalty through which the widow expiated her responsibility for her husband's death. Simultaneously, it reduced the sense of guilt in those confronted with their rage against all women. Punishment by authority became, in an infantile morality, a proof of culpability.[29] It perpetuated the fantasy of feminine aggression towards the husband, bound anxiety by giving substance to vague fears of women, and contained the fear of death in a region where death struck suddenly and frequently due to what, by popular consensus, were whimsical, feminine principles in the cosmos. On the other hand, to the extent women shared these fantasies about their ritual role and responsibility for the death of their husbands, sati was also associated with the introjection of the terrorizing maternal aspects of femininity, guilt arising from this self-image, and the tendency to use the defence of turning against one's own self in atonement.

Finally, this use of widows as scapegoats and the fear of womanhood were related to the culturally typical myths and early experiences surrounding mothering. As will be argued in a later section, a central feature of the psychological life of an Indian is his deep ambivalence towards his mother, operating within the Indian family system both as a source of close, individuating authority and as a source of uncertain, almost fickle, nurture.[30] Widows reinvoked the infantile rage towards personal mothers who always threatened to fail and towards cosmic mothers who at that point of history tended to confirm the uncertainties and 'betrayals' of the former. The 'vague rage' generated by adaptive impotence — the 'fanatic spirit roused by divided feeling' which Hastings speaks of — may have underwritten the process further.[31]

All these forces converged in the culture of the babus. Borrowing from some of the recessive aspects of Bengali folk culture and from particularized Brahmanism,[32] this babu culture made a sadistic sport out of sati. And to the extent this culture was itself

a product of Western and modern encroachments upon the traditional life-style, sati was society's weirdest response to new cultural inputs and institutional innovations. In 1818 one Oakely, an administrator at Hooghly near Calcutta, tried to explain the higher incidence and growth of sati in greater Calcutta in the following words:

> It is notorious that the natives of Calcutta and its vicinity exceed all others in profligacy and immorality of conduct; and while the depraved worship of Kali, 'the idol of the drunkard and the thief', is 'scarcely to be met with in distant provinces', it abounds in the metropolis. Elsewhere, none but the most abandoned will openly confess that he is a follower of Kali. In Calcutta we find few that are not. . . . By such men, a suttee is not regarded as a religious act but as a choice entertainment; and we may conclude that the vicious propensities of the Hindus in the vicinity of Calcutta are a cause of the comparative prevalence of the custom.[33]

Charles Grant, seeking clues to Hindu 'insensibility' in general and cruelty to women in particular, found them in the cruelty and licentiousness of gods, particularly Kali, the increasingly popular goddess of the Calcuttans.[34] No one noticed that the goddess in her new incarnation was neither intrinsic to the Brahmanic traditions nor to its Bengali variant; nor did they know that the much maligned Kali puja was not even mentioned in the well-known Tantric texts of the region and was a new institution.[35]

Did Rammohun Roy accept the equation between sati and the content of Hindu orthodoxy? Apparently he did. It was 'the peculiar practice of Hindu idolatry which', he felt, 'more than any other pagan worship, destroys the texture of the society'.[36] That is why to him the legal prohibition of sati was not enough. By itself, it did not even seem very attractive.[37] According to him, the root of the pathology was that 'advocates of idolatry and their misguided followers . . . continue, under the form of religious devotion, to practise a system which . . . prescribes crimes of most heinous nature, which even the most savage nation would blush to commit'.[38] So, it was Hindu idolatry which had to be attacked first:

> The natural inclination of the ignorant towards the worship of objects resembling their own nature, and to the external forms of rites palpable to their grosser senses . . . has rendered the generality of the

> Hindoo community . . . devoted to idol worship, — the source of prejudice and superstition and of the total destruction of moral principle, as countenancing criminal intercourse, suicide, female murder, and human sacrifices.[39]

Thus, like his contemporaries, Roy also thought Hinduism to be the culprit. Yet obviously the causal relationship between sati and Hinduism was not so simple and perhaps it would be truer to say that it was a rather small group of exposed, marginalized men who sought in Hinduism a support for their anomic response to structural changes. The new and popular version of sati was their creation, and so was the new concept of a more terrorizing cosmic motherhood by which they sought to justify it.

The Roots of Dissent

A closer examination of Rammohun Roy's writings and personal history reveals deeper sensitivities, however. He not only linked sati to the community's mode of worship, but challenged its basis by suggesting new sex role norms and sexual stereotypes, and by showing the spurious links the practice had with Hindu traditions. The word sati is a derivative of the root *sat*, truth or goodness. The widow by dying with her husband proved that she was true to him and virtuous. Roy shifted the onus of showing fidelity and rectitude to others. While men seemed to him 'naturally weak' and 'prone to be led astray by temptations of temporary gratifications', women seemed to him to have 'firmness of mind, resolution, trustworthiness and virtue'; they were 'void of duplicity' and capable of 'leading the austere life of an ascetic'.[40]

This challenge to traditional sexual identities was to have important implications for the history of reform movements in India. During the following hundred years, nearly all such movements centered around the cause of women and the dominant models of social intervention were frequently attempts to work through the peasant society's historical ambivalence towards women.[41] Roy's reinterpretations of the older concept of womanhood and the older relationship between maleness and femininity were thus aspects of a more durable theory of social reform.[42]

The reasons for this link between Roy's model and the reforms of the next generation are not particularly obscure. The various structures introduced into India by British colonialism assumed

a new colonial culture which, while being compatible with traditions, would include within it new concepts of public activism and ethics, political power, interpersonal skills and professional participation. All these concepts were deeply associated with definitions of masculinity and femininity in both the greater Sanskritic culture and Bengal's folk version of Hinduism. It is to Rammohun Roy's credit that he was the first to sense this and delineate a model of reform in which a new definition of womanhood would be the central plank. This cultural sensitivity and cognitive innovation was his main contribution to the emerging culture of modern India.

The connection between the reformer in Rammohun Roy and the reform of sati brings us to his personal history, as it epitomized his society's basic problems at that point of time and to the solution which Indian society found for itself in Rammohun Roy's life and personality. In other words, it brings us to his earliest exposures to concepts of power, activism, motherhood and religiosity, his first conflicts around the interlinkages among these concepts, the distinctive sex role images to which his family sensitized him, and the early validations and invalidations in him of the typical regional myths and fantasies centering around masculinity, femininity, nurture, propitiation and defiance.

Rammohun Roy was born in 1772 in a Vaisnava Kulin Brahman family in a village about 100 miles from Calcutta. The family had been culturally atypical for at least two generations. Contemporary revenue records mention that after the death of his grandfather, his father and uncles 'did not live together as a joint family, but were divided in food, estate and interests'.[43] This complete nuclearity of the family astounds one; in eighteenth-century Bengal the joint family may not have been the norm, but it certainly was the normal ideal. Even though a majority of Hindus stayed in partly-nuclear households, the nuclearization rarely went this far among the prosperous, landed, upper castes.[44] Perhaps the Roys, being a family of urban bureaucrats, were more fully exposed to the unsettling effects of the changing political economy of eastern India than is evident on the surface.

The impact of this deviation on Rammohun Roy's early experiences was deep. However, before describing this impact, mention must be made of a few features of a typical joint household in India which, distorted by the process of nuclearization,

had a direct bearing on the way Rammohun Roy conceptualized the problems of his society.

The first of these features is the tendency in an extended family to expose the growing child to a number of adult authorities and discourage him from distinguishing between 'near' and 'distant' relations amongst these authorities. The aim is to deter the growth of 'emotionally exclusive' loyalty towards one's own nuclear unit within the larger family. Within such a pattern of diffused authority and joint responsibility, the father generally plays a distant and non-committal role in relation to his children. He is neutralized as an immediate, intimate authority with a manifest and direct interest in his children. Once again, the aim is to blur the boundaries of the nuclear units.

However, the emotional restrictiveness of the father-son relationship in the joint family does not apply to mother-child intimacy.[45] In fact, the culture takes some care to see that the decisive memory trace for the individual remains the experience of the primordial intimacy with the only effective figure he has known within the family: his mother. In his relationship with other members, the son is categorized by his sex and age role. He is judged by standards which are impersonal. It is the mother who individualizes him.[46] The culture also strengthens this intimacy by 'idolizing' woman as a mother (to contain her conjugal role as wife and to stop fissures developing along the margins of nuclear units) and by devaluing wifehood (which induces her to look at her son as one who would give her status). Being necessarily the sole immediate source of power, nurture and wrath in early childhood, it is the mother who becomes the ultimate symbol of authority as well as the ultimate target of defiance.

The result is a deep ambivalence which links the concept of maternal authority to that of an undependable nurturant, prone to betray and eager to aggress.[47] In personal fantasies and cultural myths it produces a persistent preoccupation with maternal warmth and a persistent anxiety about motherly fickleness, aggression and counter-aggression. It also produces strong counterphobic attempts to glorify constancy in mothering and to rationalize its fluctuations as due to human frailties and aggression towards the mother or her symbols, which could be corrected by suppliance, sacrifice and restitution.[48]

The impact of these forces on the young Rammohun Roy's personality can only be guessed. For instance, it is probable that the culturally prototypical mother-son relationship might have become a source of heightened ambivalence within the nuclear household of the Roys. Both the mother and the son may have found themselves face to face in a situation where there were few structural constraints on within-family behaviour and expressive style. Again, the father might have become not merely the sole male authority and male role model within the family, but also an immediate interpersonal reality, stressing the need for a strong, intervening, paternal authority who would delineate, for himself and his sons, a clearer social identity.

Strangely, this deduced pattern neatly fits what little we know about Rammohun Roy's early interpersonal environment. Somehow both his parents appear to be exaggerated versions of traditional Indian parents, with some aspects of their personalities heavily underscored by the demands of a nuclear family.

The mother, Tarinidevi, whose turbulent relationship with her son is now accepted history, was the fervently religious daughter of a priestly family. She wielded, it is said, 'considerable influence over her husband' and was the 'real power at home'.[49] She not only 'set the general tone of family life', but directed practical affairs normally outside the prerogative of Indian women.[50] However, it is principally a certain ruthless fidelity to a cause which made Tarinidevi the most effective figure within the family. Iqbal Singh comes nearest to the maternal figure I want to invoke. He sums up Tarinidevi thus:

> . . . a remarkable woman but in quite a different and unconventional sense. She was . . . cast in a much stronger mould than the other two wives of Ramakanta . . . Whatever convictions Tarinidevi held she held strongly and with all the tenacity of a woman's will, though it is true that these convictions were not illumined by any deep understanding or moderating charity of judgement. Equally, she did not lack firmness of purpose, though, again, this firmness was not tempered by any quality of compassion and perceptiveness . . .[51]

This tenacious fidelity to convictions had a history. Before marriage Tarinidevi had been a devout Shakto and, hence, not exposed to the glorification of passivity and emotional pacifism which has always been an important part of Vaisnavism all over

India. After marriage she changed her allegiance — enthusiastically according to some, and with a vengeance, according to others — to her husband's denomination, 'as was expected of a good wife'.[52] Whatever be the social and familial pressures behind that apparently innocuous change, by a number of accounts it was this overnight transformation which encouraged Tarinidevi to make intense overt conformity to the family denomination the keynote of her self-image.

But rejected loyalties die harder than that. The Shakto commitment to forms and rituals, which Tarinidevi brought into the Vaisnava culture of the Roys, only forced her to model her Vaisnava self on her aggressive, ardent, anti-ascetic, Shakto identification. And the constraints of the pacifist asceticism of Vaisnavism only ensured the indirect but ruthless manner in which her persistent Shaktoism was expressed after marriage. To quote Iqbal Singh again, she had

> . . . a hard core of intractibility verging on ruthlessness she may have derived from her religious background . . . They owed allegiance . . . to Kali whose beauty is beyond good or evil, and carries with it, inexorably and ever-lastingly, the intimation of terror no less beyond good or evil.[53]

The 'hard core of intractibility verging on ruthlessness' with which Tarinidevi sought and defended her ideological purity was also reflected in her mothering. The children were drawn into her 'intricate web of ceremony and form', her 'almost neurotic attention to every minute detail of worship and observance', and her 'delirium of pieties'.[54] They had little protection in a culture where such traits were often considered aspects of feminine virtue and in a family where power decisively rested with the mother.[55]

The correlation between power and fiery purism that the mother demonstrated might have carried other associations too. Many years afterwards the son was to suggest that his mother's family had shown a certain purity of avocation and fidelity to faith, which his father's family had not.

> My maternal ancestors, being of the sacerdotal order by profession as well as by birth, and of a family than which none holds a higher rank in that profession, have up to the present day uniformly adhered to a life of religious observances and devotion, preferring peace and

> tranquillity of mind to the excitements of ambition, and all the allurements of worldly grandeur.[56]

The son may have also sensed early that power did not reside in the apparently patriarchal forms, but in the personalities that gave them substance. And the substance in this case was Tarinidevi's authoritarian ritualism which made traditions not merely a way of life but an ideology. The nuclearization of the Roy family only underwrote this pattern of dominance, and the associations among power, intervention in the real world of events, feminine identification and feminine cause.

Thus Tarinidevi was perhaps destined to become the ultimate target as well as the model of rebellion for her son. Along one axis, she was bound to generate in him a sweeping hostility towards women, towards the cultural symbols associated with mothering, and a defensive rigidity towards the mother-worshippers of Bengal. This hostility did not follow his exposure to the patriarchal elements of Christian, Buddhist and Islamic theologies; it was merely endorsed by these alternative systems.[57]

At the personal level, too, this hostility hounded modern India's first theoretician and activist for women's liberation throughout his life. No one who reads about Rammohun Roy's troubled relationships with his three wives, his extra-marital peccadilloes, his long and bitter legal battle against his mother, his lonely life in a separate house away from his orthodox wives and orthodox children allegiant to their mothers, can fail to sense the depth of his rage against women. When he finally left India in 1830 to defend the proscription of sati in the British Privy Council he began his journey for the cause of Hindu women by 'forgetting' to inform his youngest wife of his departure. If one considers this to be the final evidence of Rammohun Roy's latent disdain for women, there are the questions he wrote to be put to his mother in the Calcutta High Court, after she had filed a false suit against him on behalf of her step-son:

> . . . have you not instigated and prevailed on your grandson the Complainant to institute the present suit against the said Defendant, as a measure of revenge; because the said Defendant hath refused to practise the rites and ceremonies of the Hindu Religion in the manner in which you wish the same to be practised or performed? Have you not . . . estranged yourself . . . from all intercourse with the

> Defendant . . . ? Have you not repeatedly declared . . . that there will not only be no sin but that it will be meritorious to effect the temporal ruin of the Defendant . . . ? Have you not publicly declared that it will not be sinful to take away the life of a Hindoo who forsakes the idolatry and ceremonies of worship? . . . Declare solemnly on your oath, whether you do not know and believe that the present suit would not have been instituted if the Defendant had not acted in religious matters contrary to your wishes and entreaties and differently from the practices of his ancestors? Do you not in your conscience believe that you will be justified in your power to effect the ruin of the Defendant and to enable the complainant to succeed in the present suit . . . ?[58]

Inevitably, this perception of a vindictive, homicidal mother led to a deep sense of hurt and anger and in turn to a haunting sense of guilt. More so because, in the final reckoning, Rammohun Roy defeated his mother decisively on every issue. He defied her religious orthodoxy, defeated her economic and familial powers, won his legal suit against her, and later on virtually denied her motherhood. In other words, the defeat he inflicted on her was total. And Tarinidevi, that proud matriarch, had to end her days humbly sweeping the steps of a temple at a well-known place of pilgrimage.

Total defeats are psychologically dangerous, but so is total victory. It was no different with Rammohun Roy:

> Whenever he spoke of his mother, it was with warm affection and a 'glistening eye'. The glistening eye itself was, perhaps, a screen for something too deep for tears. Behind it a more perceptive observer might well have registered the febrile pulse of a remorse for which even the most convincing intellectual essays in self justification could offer no effective therapy.[59]

Such a sense of guilt seeks large-scale rationalizations as well as large-scale reparations. I shall describe in a while how Rammohun's reformism did ultimately erect a magnificent structure of public atonement.

All this, however, does not negate the fact that, along a second axis, Tarinidevi was also bound to generate in her son a sharp awareness of the power, individuality, capacities and rights of women. I have already mentioned that Rammohun tried to reverse the traditional definitions of masculinity and femininity

in his culture. These efforts were directly influenced by Roy's expanded awareness of what women were and could be. To this expansion of awareness Tarinidevi had contributed handsomely. Not merely that. When his contemporaries assess him as 'shrewd, vigilant, active, ambitious and prepossessing in his manners',[60] one is tempted to relate this image to descriptions of Tarinidevi — purposeful, authoritative and self-confident — managing the affairs of the Roys and fighting a continuous battle against all outer and inner encroachments on her newfound identity. This was a part of his self the reformer could ill afford to waste.

In fact, it was on this combination of rage, guilt and admiration that Rammohun Roy based his perception of an inverse relationship between authority images, around which his community's faith was organized, and the needs of the contemporary world. Rammohun Roy had to try to topple Bengal's transcendental symbols of motherliness; and it had to be for the sake of Bengal's suffering women.

Let us now turn to the mother's lack-lustre consort and the family's grandest failure: Ramakanta Roy. Occupied with opportunities, profits and possibly profiteering,[61] he was in many ways a typical product as well as a representative of the Bhadralok response to new social forces. Or so it might have seemed to his son. There is some vague evidence that Ramakanta's failures as an authority figure were, for his son, the first adaptive failures of the community.

Ramakanta was, in the mellow and euphemistic language of an earlier generation, 'an upright and estimable man', and 'noted for his quiet and retiring disposition'.[62] This disposition, some say, was an outcome of his unhappy work experiences. He was the son of an urban bureaucrat, and had been a functionary in the Nawab's court at Murshidabad in north Bengal. It is said he was sacked for inefficiency and dishonesty a short time before Rammohun was born. It has also been suggested by chroniclers belonging to a less generous age, that the occupational failure of Ramakanta was neither singular nor unprecedented. It was 'one of a series which ended only with his death'.[63]

We do not know how far this career demonstrated to him and to his sons his ineffectiveness as an urbanite, as a member of the growing tertiary sector, and as a male authority in the family. But we know his reaction to these failures. He defended himself by an

interpersonal withdrawal which was almost pathetic. He 'was often so disgusted with the treatment he received that he would neglect his affairs for a while, and retire to meditate and tell *Harinam* beads in a garden of Tulsi plants'.[64] Another biographer is more explicit. Ramakanta, he says, 'did not command any great ability or resourcefulness . . . when things did not go well . . . [he] retreated into the brittle shell of his Vaisnava devotionalism . . . .'[65] Apparently, both in the family and in the outside world, he remained 'singularly colourless, almost inchoate and lacking in clear focus, when contrasted with the granite figure of his second wife'.[66] In these, the Vaisnava idealization of passive submission and deindividualization provided him with an important consensual validation of his personal life-style and self-concept.

Perhaps the young Rammohun Roy was not taken in by this belated return to religion. Perhaps, at a certain level of consciousness, he connected the father's resignation of power within the family to his losing his Brahmanic potency, traditionally maintained through spiritual exercises and scholarly skills.[67] There is a clue in what, many years afterwards, Rammohun Roy once said about his mother's consort:

> My ancestors were Brahmins of a high order, and from time immemorial were devoted to the religious duties of their race, down to my fifth progenitor, who about one hundred and forty years ago gave up spiritual exercises for worldly pursuits and aggrandizement. His descendants ever since followed his example.[68]

What he meant by this description is made obvious by what he said about his mother's side of the family.

Given his retreatist style, Ramakanta did not pay much attention to his children. For them he remained a distant, detached and impersonal symbol of authority.[69] Yet the nuclear household he 'headed' and the exposures to which his family was subject demanded an altogether different style of functioning. The need for a male authority, who would show some competence in handling the contradictions within the Bhadralok life-style, almost certainly must have been felt by his growing sons, sensitized to exactly these needs by the family and subcultural experiences and searching for a more viable male identity. Instead, Ramakanta continued to play the traditional roles of the father as an 'intruding stranger' and as a 'castrated victim of an aggressive mother'.[70]

The distance between Ramakanta and his son produced less intimate rancour than that produced by the relationship between Tarinidevi and her son, however. Perhaps there was an awareness in both father and son that the father was fighting a battle not unlike the son's. And indeed, sharing the crisis of values in the Bengali babus, Ramakanta *was* trying to evolve a viable style of social adaptation, even if with low sensitivity and poor success. Not surprisingly, Rammohun Roy's spirited adolescent confrontations with his father always carried suggestions of mutual respect and empathy. Certainly they were free from much of the bitterness which his confrontation with the mother generated.[71] It is noteworthy that the two well-known instances of separation between the father and young son both ended with the son being accommodated. (The worldly-wise son did not opt for reconciliation in a third instance when reconciliation would have meant economic disaster for him.[72]) In adulthood too, though Rammohun Roy saw whenever tense, dejected or ill, 'the frowning features of his father rise unbidden on his imagination',[73] he could recount humorously, and without rancour or disrespect, his differences with his father.[74]

In sum, Ramakanta and his son found each other more acceptable antagonists than Tarinidevi and her son. To some extent at least, in spite of all the discouragement which Ramakanta's personality provided, Rammohun Roy did try to move towards the father, to establish communication with him, and to see in him a possible source of support and a possible model of social sensitivity.[75]

The Design of Reform

How did Rammohun Roy relate these early contradictions to the reform of sati? A number of suggestions can be made.

First, his earliest interpersonal experiences and conflicts had convinced him that religion was the key to the process of social change in India.[76] Piety was not Rammohun Roy's strong point and he himself was perhaps not very intensely a man of religion. If anything, he was a hard-headed man of the world, a materialist who believed religion to be an expression of man's economic and social conditions, and a hedonist in practice. There are even reasons to suspect that he held, along with what some have called

his 'theistic passion', attitudes compatible with agnosticism.[77] However, Roy had seen the central role religion played in the lives of his parents and his culture. He also knew, from personal exposures, that religion could be a great divider, that it was in religion that authorities could be most intimately faced and successfully defied. And being a practical idealist, he was unwilling to sacrifice this information for the sake of any readymade ideological package.

As part of this larger awareness, Rammohun Roy's first contribution to the nineteenth-century model of reform was the theory that his community's form of mother worship and the related deeper concerns with mothering and orality — expressed, as he saw it, in 'the peculiar mode of diet' that had become 'the chief part of the theory and practice of Hinduism' — constituted the crux of traditions in Bengal. In this he was a precursor of a second generation of reformers who were to make heterodoxy in food and the attitude to women the major symbols of defiance in nineteenth-century Bengal, and conformity to commensal and other oral taboos the first criterion of orthodoxy.[78]

The second theme in Rammohun's model was the equation which he made between the anomic babu life-style and the new content of Bengali Hinduism. His response to the religious and social situation of Bengal was a new theology and a new projective system incorporating a different set of authority images. Sati, to him, was only part of a wider syndrome. More basic was the obsessive rigidity and the deadly seriousness of rituals organized around the image of a threatening and violent mother deity. Rammohun Roy had to reject these rituals exactly as he had to reject the *Manbhanjan* play in late childhood. Both as a psychological defence and as an ideology, the cultural concept of sacred motherliness could not maintain its compatibility with the inner life of one who had faced so much maternal hostility and held in store such deep anger against his mother. The image of a powerful, irascible celestial mother — who was propitiated only when the self-castrated son identified with his ineffective father — was authentic, but had to be vehemently denied.

Invalidated by both outer and inner experiences, the Bengali pantheon became for Roy a perversity, a source of magic which did not work. But as in the case of his own mother, this rejection of cosmic mothers, too, was bound to arouse deep moral anxieties.

And he had to cope with these anxieties by means of a spirited battle to protect women from men's aggression, by fighting for their rights in different sectors of life and, trivial though it might seem, by being impersonally, but consistently and even aggressively, polite and courteous to the women he encountered in his daily life.[79]

Roy's Brahmoism incorporated both these themes.[80] First, it tried to banish the older gods from the lives of all Bengalis. Each god became to the first Brahmo a part of 'heathen mythology' and represented 'the gross errors of a puerile system of idol worship [not] becoming the dignity of human beings'.[81] He rejected Kali because in her worship 'human sacrifices, the use of wine, criminal intercourse, licentious songs are included' and 'because debauchery . . . universally forms the principal part of her followers';[82] he rejected Shiva, the submissive consort of Kali, because he was a 'destroying attribute' and a family man;[83] and he rejected Krishna because he seemed a 'debauch' and had killed his nurse-maid by sucking her blood while being breast-fed.[84] In other words, not only the themes of homicidal mother and acquiescent father, but also those of matricide and 'infanticide' had to be eliminated from the Hindu projective system. Instead, for the first time in a modern Hindu sect the concept of the deity was sought to be made patriarchal. Apparently, what Ramakanta could not do for his son, the semiticized Brahmo concept of godhead could: it projected a paternal authority — firm, reliable, and convincing — that could be offset against the fearsome inner authority of his mother.[85]

Brahmoism also managed to give to the conjugal role of Bengali women an importance and dignity it never had before. It attacked the matriarchal status of women in the family and religion by emphasizing their role in the world of public activities, and it sabotaged the sacred symbols and images with which Bengali women identified and sought compensation from in their narrow and constricted lives. Instead of their magical powers and magical capability of doing harm, they had in Brahmoism the justification for wielding real and direct power as individuals with the right to live their own lives.[86]

Both the themes made eminent sense to those exposed to a new set of effective, impersonal, organizational authorities — all unresponsive to acts of propitiation, sacrifice and ritual conformity.

The rewards these authorities controlled were based on criteria irrelevant to anchored values: personal autonomy, achievement and initiative, denial of the fated and the ordained, shrewd competitiveness, and ambitious this-worldliness. All this could not but make apparent the latent need for a new male self-definition at the centre of which would be a new concept of authoritative masculinity. The Brahmo godhead was an attempt to meet this need and to help Rammohun Roy's private fantasies establish an inverse association with the grand myth of his culture. By toppling the absolute maternal authorities in the sphere of the sacred, he was only coping with his nuclear conflicts and trying to sabotage a tradition's symbolic core.

In this attempt the monism of *advaita* came in handy. Rammohun Roy gave a new meaning to this monism by 'misreading' Shankaracharya's ultimate objective as the revival of monotheism in India on the basis of Vedanta.[87] This was absurd because Vedanta posited an attributeless Brahman and rejected all forms of prayer in favour of pure contemplation of God.[88] Rammohun Roy, on the other hand, actually succeeded in invoking the image of a patriarchal God, 'the author and governor of the universe' — 'He, by whom the birth, existence and annihilation of the world is regulated'.[89] A recent observer, who has nothing to do with psychology or the social sciences, correctly identifies the basic imagery involved in this divine sex change:

> The very word *Upasana* employed . . . in the sense . . . of 'propitiation and worship', implies a dualistic conception of an individual's soul's longing for the divine objective . . . Rammohun's Brahma, though mentioned as 'imperceptible and indefinable' is a very real Brahman, who is 'the author and governor of the universe' and therefore not wholly devoid of attributes.[90]

What purpose did such a monism serve in Rammohun Roy's model of reform? The answer could be given in four parts.

First, monism has traditionally smoothened the acceptance in India of dissent, new religious cults and alternative interpretations of sacred texts, and justified them as diversities that were part of a larger transcendent unity. By giving salience to Shankara's system, Rammohun Roy not only opened a new debate amongst his contemporaries on Hinduism as a unified religious system and as a single cultural strain, but also made available for the next

generation of reformers a powerful legitimacy of dissent and a tool for social intervention.[91]

Second, the Vedas and Upanishads were a sufficiently vague and complex authority to stand new interpretations. Like the fluid psychological and cultural system that greater Calcutta had become, here too was a collection of fluid sacred authorities, on which a reformer could impose his personal meaning. In stressing an interpretive system which gave greater scope to dissent, Rammohun Roy therefore also gave centrality to texts which were best suited for plural reinterpretations.

Third, the emphasis on monism strengthened the social position of women by separating the feminine principles of nature and feminine godheads from the social role of women. Unlike in the West, where the concept of a patriarchal god has often legitimized male dominance, in India divine matriarchy burdened women with the task of coping with shared fantasies of womanly responsibility for failures of nature and nurture. Rammohun Roy's theology was an attempt to liberate Indian women from this responsibility.

Fourth, in rejecting his mother and her faith Rammohun Roy also rejected rituals and rites as the central part of Hinduism. This was basically an attack on folk Hinduism and, perhaps, a latent attempt to further Sanskritize the Hindu little cultures. In this respect at least Rammohun Roy had not misunderstood the Upanishads and his hero Shankara. All his life he pleaded for 'disinterested worship' and 'faith in God which leads to absorption', unconditionally rejecting 'rites which have future fruition for their object'.[92] It was in fact an interested worshipper, trying to sanctify the disinterested worship he himself could not offer the gods, in the hope that he would be forgiven because his own interests were not merely personal.

The fact remains, however, that Rammohun Roy's use of *advaita* was no less instrumental than his use of other religions. Perhaps only Adam, his collaborator and friend, had an inkling of it:

> Rammohun Roy, I am persuaded, supports this institution [Brahmo Samaj] not because he believes in the divine authority of the Ved, but solely as an instrument for overthrowing idolatry. To be candid, . . . he uses Unitarian Christianity in the same way.[93]

We now have a better idea of which 'goddess' Roy was trying all along to overthrow and which 'god' he wanted to install in her place. To say this is not to flaunt an uncompromising psychologism. It is to recognize the fact that no reform is entirely a public event. By its very nature, it is also a private statement and Rammohun Roy's was such a statement. It is not incidental that his reform was a last compliment to his father and the final gesture of reparation to his mother. We have seen that his parents were something more than the parameters of a personal history: they also represented the contradictions of an age and a culture. The incidental fact is that Rammohun Roy's reform happened to be the only success Ramakanta ever attained and the only victory Tarinidevi ever won.

Notes

1. In this context, the recent controversy among historians over who was ultimately responsible for the decision to legally proscribe the rite is both misleading and irrelevant. The fact remains that Roy was an embodiment of the anti-sati movement to both anti-sati and pro-sati groups as well as to the British rulers (who in turn were ambivalent towards the rite because of their non-interventionist social policy). And it was only he who provided a consistent explanation of the practice and a theory of reform which could be understood by all these three groups. In fact, one may guess that it was this ability to sum up in his personality not merely the hostilities of the reformers, but also the latent ambivalence of society towards the rite, which makes Rammohun Roy a symbol of 19th century reform movements. To initiate a search for the roots of his reformism in his personal life is also therefore an attempt to locate the major psychological needs behind the social forces which might have powered the rite and then rendered it anachronistic.
2. A.S. Altekar, *The Position of Women in Hindu Civilization* (Banaras: Banaras Hindu University, 1938); and K.M. Kapadia, *Marriage and Family in India* (Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1958).
3. Upendra Thakur, *The History of Suicide in India* (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1963).

4. Detailed district-wise statistics on sati are given in Sophia D. Collet, *The Life and Letters of Raja Rammohun Roy*, D.K. Biswas and P.C. Ganguli (eds) (Calcutta: Sadharon Brahmo Samaj, 1962) pp. 83–4, 200, 250. Cf. M.J. Mehta, 'The British Rule and the Practice of Sati in Gujarat', *Journal of Indian History*, vol. XLIV, part II, no. 131, August 1966, pp. 553–60.
5. The word *Shakta* is the adjective derived from the noun *Shakti*, which literally means power, but usage-wise also refers to the ultimate principles of sacred maternity and femininity and to the most powerful symbols of sacred authority, the goddesses Durga and Kali. The Shakti sect of Hinduism, with its emphasis on the worship of Durga and Kali, is, in Bengal, mainly a sect of the upper castes. The pacifist Vaisnava sect, which emphasizes the worship of Krishna and his consort Radha is mainly associated with the lower castes.
6. Under the new regime, they continued to own three-fourths of all estates in Bengal, dominated both politics and administration, and controlled most of the trade in the hands of Indians. On famines, their social results and normlessness, some data are available in N.K. Sinha, *The Economic History of Bengal*, vols I and II (Calcutta: Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyay, 1965), and R.C. Majumdar, *Glimpses of Bengal in the Nineteenth Century* (Calcutta: Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyay, 1960).
7. N.K. Bose, *Culture and Society in India* (Bombay: Asia, 1967), pp. 358–68; Sinha, *Economic History of Bengal*, vol. II, p. 206.
8. See Rajat K. Roy, 'Introduction', in V.C. Joshi (ed.), *Rammohun Roy and the Process of Modernization in India* (New Delhi: Vikas, 1975) pp. 4–6. On Sanskritization or emulation of greater Sanskritic or Brahmanic culture as a means of social mobility, see M.N. Srinivas, *Social Change in India and Other Essays* (Berkeley: University of California, 1966).
9. One reason for this could have been that women did not play any direct part in the productive process in these sectors.
10. He perhaps had a personal reason to see economic motives behind the ritual. While neither his father's surviving wives nor any other widow in his family had committed sati when the family was prosperous, once their fortunes started declining, things changed. Rammohun Roy's elder brother's widow burnt herself in 1811 before his eyes, it is said. This fact has been challenged, but if true, it might have established a link in his mind between economic uncertainties and the rite.

11. P.V. Kane, *History of Dharmasastra*, vol. III (Poona: Oriental Research Institute, 1946) pp. 558–9.
12. S.C. Mitra, 'On the Origin and Development of the Bengal School of Hindu Law', *Law Quarterly Review, 21*, 1905, pp. 380–92; and *22*, 1906, pp. 50–63; quoted and discussed in Kane, *Dharmasastra*, vol. III, pp. 558–9.
13. Interestingly, Rammohun Roy provides a more or less similar interpretation both in his famous appeal to the Governor-General and in his treatise on women's property rights in India. See *The English Works of the Raja Rammohun Roy*, vol. I. Kalidas Nag and Debojyoti Burman (eds) (Calcutta: Sadharon Brahmo Samaj, 1945–8) pp. 1–10; and Roy's letter to Mrs Woodford, ibid., vol. IV, pp. 90–1.
14. Rammohun Roy quoted in P.K. Sen, *Biography of a New Faith* (Calcutta: Thacker, Spink, 1950) pp. 34–5; R.C. Majumdar, 'Social Reform', in R.C. Majumdar, A.K. Majumdar and D.K. Ghose (eds), *British Paramountcy and the Indian Renaissance*, part II (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1965) p. 270.
15. For example, Thomas Bowrey, *A Geographical Account of Countries Round the Bay of Bengal, 1669–1679*, R.C. Temple (ed.), (Hakluyt Society and Kraus Reprint Ltd., Neudelul Leichtenstein, Series 2), vol. II, pp. 197–205. Rammohun himself in a general way believed in this conspiracy theory; see his *English Works*, vol. II, pp 43–4, 48–9.
16. This was primarily because the colonial system needed the Brahmanic skills of reading, writing and accounting and the legitimacy which only Brahmans, when coopted by the system, could give to it.
17. A.F. Salahuddin, *Social Ideas and Social Change in Bengal, 1818–1835* (Leyden: E.J. Brill, 1965) p. 126, mentions pride and economic discontent as two possible causes of support for sati.
18. Cf. Norman Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons* (New York: Basic Books, 1975). Cohn argues that the European witch-hunt in the middle ages was a response to the fear of regression to an earlier belief system which was only partly ego-alien.
19. Sen, *Biography of a New Faith*, pp. 34–5.
20. Dispatch of 15 August 1822, quoted in Collet, p. 198.
21. Ibid., pp. 258–9.
22. See also J.H. Harrington, cited in K. Ingham, *Reformers in India, 1793–1833* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956) p. 50.

23. W.H. Carey, *The Good Old Days of Honourable John Company, Being Curious Reminiscences During the Rule of the East India Company from 1600 to 1858*, 1882 (Calcutta: Quins Books, 1964).
24. Some of these cultural parameters have been identified by S.B. Dasgupta, *Bharater Shakti Sadhana o Shakta Sahitya* (Calcutta: Sahitya Samsad, 1960); J.C. Roy Vidyanidhi, *Puja-Parban* (Calcutta: Viswa-Bharati, 1951); Chintaharan Chakravarti, *Banglar Palparban* (Calcutta: Viswa-Bharati, 1953); and *Tantrakatha* (Calcutta: Viswa-Bharati, 1955).
25. These new maternal archetypes established links with a number of second-order deities presiding over important aspects of life which were becoming sectors of stress. Annapurna or Annada, another incarnation of Durga, was the protector of crops and the soil and the giver of food. Durga's daughters, the benevolent Saraswati and the benevolent but fickle Lakshmi, were the goddesses of learning and wealth respectively. Two irascible goddesses, Olaichandi and Sheetala presided over cholera and small-pox. Shashti ruled over conception, childbirth and child-health — important functions in a community with high birth- and infant-mortality rates. Superstitions were dominated by elderly witches and the goddesses invoked in Tantra — an originally Buddhist but now Shakto ritual and magical technique (for murder, injury or enslavement from a distance) becoming popular at about this time (the first mention of *Radhatantra*, the major tantric text, was in a list of books prepared in 1777; Chakravarty, *Tantrakatha*) All these were related to the primal image of Kali. The traditional strategy of propitiating these goddesses was some form of sacrifice: human or animal, personal or group, actual or symbolic. But the most preferred sacrifice was human, as it was human sacrifice which Durga and Kali were believed to relish most (Vidyanidhi, *Puja-Parban*, pp. 10–23, 77–260). It was as if one could placate the celestial mothers by identifying with their cannibalistic selves and aggressing for the mother's causes. In sum, the Durga and Kali aspects of motherhood were not as orthogonal as they may at first sight appear.
26. On the social and religious life of the babus of the time, see R.C. Majumdar, *Nineteenth Century Bengal*; and Binoy Ghose, *Kalkata Culture* (Calcutta: Bihar Sahitya Bhavan, 1953) pp. 91–8.

27. This was evident in the attitude towards widows in general, the various mores they had to conform to, their self-hatred and self-inflicted sufferings.
28. See Collet, *Rammohun Roy*, pp. 92–5; also Rammohun Roy, *Granthabali*, vol. III, Brajendranath Bandopadhyay and Sajanikanta Das (eds) (Calcutta: Bangiya Sahitya Parishad, n.d.).
29. On punishment as an infantile proof of guilt and as a stage or aspect of human morality, see J. Piaget, *Moral Judgement of the Child* (Glencoe: Free Press, 1948). A well-known brief review of available research on this subject is by L. Kohlberg, 'Development of Moral Character and Moral Ideology', M.L. and L.W. Hoffman (eds), *Child Development Research* (New York: Russel Sage Foundations, 1964) pp. 383–431.
30. See Section III below. For an extended treatment of the literature on the subject see Ashis Nandy and Sudhir Kakar, 'Culture and Personality in India', in Udai Parekh (ed.), *Research in Psychology* (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, in press).
31. On rage as a response to adaptive impotence, see E.H. Erikson, *Insight and Responsibility* (London: Faber and Faber, 1964) p. 214.
32. This particularization of the greater Sanskritic traditions in Bengal was the other reinterpretation taking place in the community. It is, however, beyond the scope of this paper.
33. Collet, *Rammohun Roy*, p. 85. The higher incidence of sati in the Calcutta area is borne out by published statistics. See Collet, *Rammohun Roy*, pp. 83–4. Also Majumdar, *Nineteenth Century Bengal*, p. 269.
34. Charles Grant, 'Observations on the State of Society among the Asiatic Subjects of Great Britain, Particularly with Respect of Morals, and on the Means of Improving it', written in 1792, *Parliamentary Papers*, House of Commons, 1812–1813, *10*, Paper 282, pp. 1–112, particularly, pp. 60–6.
35. Chakravary, *Tantrakatha*. The philosophical practice of Tantra, though Buddhist in origin, had become by this time relatively central to the Shakti cult. Popular belief considered Kali puja an essential part of it.
36. Rammohun Roy, 1816, *English Works*, vol. II, p. 60.
37. Collet, *Rammohun Roy*, p. 75. It is this hesitancy, more than anything else, which has created recent doubts about Rammohun Roy's anti-sati position.
38. Rammohun Roy, 1819, *English Works*, vol. II, p. 23, also p. 52.

39. Ibid., p. vii.
40. Ibid., vol. VI, p. 5; and vol. III, pp. 87–137; and *Granthabali*, vol. III; Collet, *Rammohun Roy*, pp. 92–5.
41. See on this subject 'Woman Versus Womanliness', in Ashis Nandy, *At the Edge of Psychology: Essays in Politics and Culture* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1980), Chapter 2.
42. Patricia Uberoi has drawn my attention to the fact that a similar latent theory of social changes had emerged in China as a part of the May Fourth Movement (1915–20) which fought the traditional Chinese proscription of widow remarriage, and the institutional encouragements given to widows to commit suicide, particularly if dishonoured.
43. I. Singh, *Rammohun Roy*, vol. I (Bombay: Asia, 1958).
44. For a brief discussion of the incidence of joint families in various social strata, see M.S. Gore, 'The Impact of Industrialization and Urbanization on the Aggarwal Family of Delhi Area' (Ph.D. Dissertation, Columbia University, 1961, University Microfilms, Ann Arbor), Chapter 1, pp. 2–59.
45. See P. Spratt, *Hindu Culture and Personality* (Bombay: Manaktalas, 1966). On warm non-demanding intimacy in the mother-son relationship in the early years of growth see also G.M. Carstairs, *The Twice-Born* (Bloomington: Indiana, 1958) particularly, pp. 157–8; Dhirendra Narayan, 'Indian National Character in the Twentieth Century', *The Annals of American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 370, March 1967, pp. 124–32; and Gore, *The Aggarwal Family*, p. 11.
46. Ibid., p. 36. This happens also because, to regulate conjugality, a patrilineal or patrilocal society cannot easily minimize the role of the genitor. It therefore emphasises perforce the role of the mother and underplays the role of the woman (Ibid., pp. 11–12). See also Margaret Cormack, *The Hindu Woman* (New York: Columbia University, 1953) pp. 150–1; Aileen D. Ross, *The Hindu Family in its Urban Setting* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1961) pp. 101–3.
47. For other sources and aspects of this ambivalence see studies of the traditional Indian system of childrearing in Carstairs, *The Twice Born*, particularly, pp. 152–69; Leigh Mintern and J.T. Hitchtock, 'The Rajputs of Khalapur'; Beatrice Whiting (ed.), *Six Cultures* (New York: Wiley, 1963) pp. 203–361; Leigh Mintern and W.W. Lambert, *Mothers of Six Cultures* (New York: Wiley, 1964) pp. 230–9; and Spratt, *Hindu Culture and Personality.*

Sudhir Kakar has shown that this ambivalence is significantly deeper in Bengal than other parts of India. See his 'Aggression in Indian Society: An Analysis of Folk Tales', *Indian Journal of Psychology*, 49 (2), June 1974, pp. 119–26.

48. See some instances in Kakar, 'Aggression in Indian Society', pp. 23–6, 226–7; Carstairs, *The Twice Born*, pp. 156–9.
49. Collet, *Rammohun Roy*, p. 4; and Singh, *Rammohun Roy*, pp. 22–3.
50. Singh, *Rammohun Roy*; R.C. Dutta, *Cultural Heritage of Bengal* (Calcutta: Punthi Pustak, 1962) p. 91.
51. Singh, *Rammohun Roy*, p. 19.
52. Ibid., p. 20; Collet, *Rammohun Roy*, p. 4.
53. Singh, *Rammohun Roy*, p. 20.
54. Ibid., pp. 20, 22–3.
55. See a comparable situation in the childhood of a later generation Brahmo in Nandy, 'Defiance and Conformity in Science: The World of Jagadis Chandra Bose' in *Alternative Sciences* (New Delhi: Allied, 1980).
56. Roy's letter to Gordon, 1832, reprinted from *Athenaeum and Literary Gazetteer* in S.C. Chakravarti (ed.), *The Father of Modern India* (Calcutta: Rammohun Roy Centenary Committee), 1935, vol. II, p. 119.
57. Even in latency, he was already intolerant of the concept of a weak god subservient to a female deity. He would start crying, it is said, whenever a particular scene of the folk play *Manbhanjan* was enacted. The scene depicted Krishna,the supreme god of the Vaisnavas, placating Radha, his consort, by weeping and clasping her feet, while his peacock headgear and clothes lay rolling in the dust. Collet, *Rammohun Roy*, pp. 5–6.
58. Cited in Singh, *Rammohun Roy*, pp. 80–1.
59. Ibid., pp. 183–4.
60. Missionary Register, Church of England, September 1816; in Singh, *Rammohun Roy*, p. 161.
61. Ibid.; S.K. De, *Bengali Literature in the Nineteenth Century* (Calcutta: Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyay, 1962 [2nd edition]), p. 503.
62. Sivanath Shastri, 1911, quoted in Collet, *Rammohun Roy*, p. 2.
63. For example, Singh, *Rammohun Roy*, p. 16.
64. Collet, *Rammohun Roy*, p. 14.
65. Singh, *Rammohun Roy*, pp. 21–2.
66. Ibid., p. 19.

67. Both Spratt and Carstairs have suggested that the Brahmanic culture equated cerebral skills with sexual power.
68. Letter to Gordon, in Chakravarty, *Tantrakatha*, p. 119.
69. Ibid., pp. 21–2.
70. Carstairs, *The Twice-Born*, p. 159.
71. Rammohun cited in Singh, *Rammohun Roy*, p. 38, and Collet, *Rammohun Roy*, p. 6.
72. Collet, *Rammohun Roy*; Singh, *Rammohun Roy*.
73. W.J. Fox, *A Discourse on the Occasion of the Death of Raja Rammohun Roy* (London: 1833). Quoted in R. Chanda and J.K. Majumdar, *Selections from Official Letters and Documents Relating to the Life of Raja Rammohun Roy*, vol. I (1771–1830) (Calcutta: Oriental Book Agency, 1938) p. xxxiii.
74. Collet, *Rammohun Roy*, pp. 6–7; Singh, *Rammohun Roy*, p. 38.
75. This ability of the father to tie his son to himself 'in such a way that overt rebellion or hate was impossible' has been hypothesized to be a source of reformism. See Erikson, *Insight and Responsibility*, pp. 202–3.
76. R.C. Majumdar, *Nineteenth Century Bengal*, p. 27, describes how in opposition to David Hare's idea of establishing a college, Rammohun pleaded for the establishment of a Brahma Sabha (see n. 2, p. 39). Though he also took part in the propagation of Western education in India, it was without rejecting the primacy of religious reform. One also remembers that Rammohun founded in 1822 an Anglo-Hindu school, being dissatisfied with the secular education provided by the Hindu College.
77. See for instance Sumit Sarkar, 'Rammohun Roy and the Break with the Past', in Joshi, *Rammohun Roy*, pp. 46–88.
78. Sivanath Shastri, 1903, *Ramtanu Lahiri o Tatkaleen Bangasamaj* (Calcutta: New Age, 1957), pp. 85–8, 101–3; Rajnarayan Basu, *Atmacharit* (Calcutta: Kuntaline, 1908); N.K. Bose, *Modern Bengal* (Calcutta: Vidyodaya, 1959), p. 48.

    It should please psychoanalytically-minded readers to know that, as the pioneer of this movement and as Tarini Devi's son, Roy himself was a great gourmet. At home he ate Bengali, Mughal and Western food. He drank choice wines with his European friends and, to the chagrin of orthodox Calcuttans, employed a Muslim as one of his cooks. Yet such were his oral needs to defy that, when he went to England, he took a Brahman cook with him and, at a dinner given by the directors

of the East India Company in his honour in London, he turned a *pukka* Brahman and stuck to boiled rice and water.

79. One does not have to be a psychologist to sense the uncertainty towards women in one who always got up from his chair when his wives entered his room, particularly when the whole world knew that the wives were on the worst of terms with Rammohun and, being aggressively orthodox, could never appreciate this formal Western gesture.

80. By 1825 Roy's religious propaganda grew into an organized faith based on the Vedas. He established a Vedanta College in that year and, finally, in 1828, the Brahmo Sabha. In 1830, Roy established a Church in Calcutta to worship in a congregational form, 'the One Eternal Unsearchable and Immutable Being who is the Author and Preserver of the Universe'. The Church deed prohibited the entry of any picture or image in the Church.

81. *English Works*, vol. II, p. 92.

82. Ibid.

83. Letter to Estlin, 1827; *English Works*, vol. IV, p. 90; also Ibid., vol. II, p. 23.

84. Ibid., p. 92.

85. These imageries, however, dissociated Brahmoism from some of the basic symbols of both the greater Sanskritic culture and Bengal's folk Hinduism. Later Brahmos tried to remedy this to some extent.

86. Ibid., vol. I, particularly the tract on property rights of women, pp. 1–10.

87. Rammohun Roy, quoted by R.C. Majumdar in Majumdar, Majumdar and Ghose, *British Paramountcy and Indian Renaissance*, vol. II, p. 101.

88. Max Muller says, 'Rammohun Roy himself, when . . . he fortified himself behind the ramparts of Veda, had no idea what the Veda really was. Vedic learning was at a low ebb in Bengal, and Rammohun Roy had never passed through a regular training in Sanskrit.' *Biographical Essays*, 20, vol. VIII, in Sen, *A New Faith*.

89. *English Works*, vol. II, p. 174.

90. Dey, *Bengali Literature*, pp. 516–17. It is not surprising that Rammohun Roy greatly admired Luther who he felt had reinstated monotheism and toppled the idolatry practised by Catholicism. Similarly he aggressively rejected the Baptist and Anglican concepts of Trinity.

91. See on this theme 'The Making and Unmaking of Political Cultures in India', Nandy, *At the Edge of Psychology*, Chapter 3.
92. Roy, Translation of *Kathopanishad*, 1818, *English Works*, vol. III, pp. 93, 94.
93. Quoted in Collet, *Rammohun Roy*, p. 225.

14

The Bloodthirsty Tongue and the Self-Feeding Breast: Homosexual Fellatio Fantasy in a South Indian Ritual Tradition

Sarah Caldwell

In the South Indian state of Kerala, the predominant deity is known as Bhagavati ('Goddess'), a powerful independent mother goddess who is also a virgin. Regarded by devotees as a form of the pan-Indian fierce goddess Kali, Bhagavati receives the ritual propitiations of devotees during the hot, dry harvest season, thereby ensuring the continued fertility of the land and its people in the coming year. Legends and ritual enactments offered to Bhagavati elaborate familiar themes of ambivalence toward female sexuality found throughout India, but an examination of their special form in Kerala can throw light on dimensions of the symbolism neglected in previous psychoanalytic treatments. This essay demonstrates that in Kerala, symbolism of the fierce goddess does not represent abreactions of the primal scene, fantasies of a Kleinian 'phallic mother', or introjection of the father's penis; rather, we will show that themes of eroticism and aggression in the mythology are male transsexual fantasies reflecting intense preoedipal fixation on the mother's body and expressing conflicts over primary feminine identity. Moreover, we will explore the relationship between these mythic and ritual themes and actual homosexual practice in Kerala, demonstrating dimensions of deep

motivation in this symbolism which have not previously been recognized by scholars in South Asia.[1]

Kerala ritual arts dedicated to the fierce goddess are striking in their insistence upon embodied deity. Throughout southwestern India, possession dance and drama are the characteristic forms of worship offered to fierce deities like Bhagavati.[2] Exclusively male ritual specialists dress as and become possessed by the spirit of the goddess during the temple festivals, enacting her mythic deeds and providing devotees with direct experience of the goddess in living form. All-night dramatic performances involving possession and healing are augmented by offerings of blood sacrifice (or its symbolic substitutes). Male oracles called *veliccappatu* serve as ritual specialists in Bhagavati temples, impersonating the goddess and sometimes slashing their heads with curved iron swords during ecstatic possession trances.[3] The essential features of the goddess possession complex in Kerala are male transvestite enactment of the fierce goddess through spirit possession, emphasis on the goddess's anger and sexuality, and satisfaction of her thirst for male blood/semen through sacrificial offerings. Images of female oral sadism and male phallic masochism predominate both myth and ritual in the male-dominated goddess cult.

Some of these themes are elaborated in the *Darikavadham*, 'The Killing of Darika', a tale that appears in both oral and written versions throughout Kerala and forms the basis of the performance rituals dedicated to Bhagavati.[4] A brief version of the story follows: The demon Darika, after intense ascetic practice, secured a boon from the god Brahma that he would be invincible and could not be killed by any man. Moreover a drop of his blood falling on the ground would immediately generate thousands more of himself. Thus empowered, Darika began to harass the world and commit numerous depredations. When the great ascetic deity Siva came to know of the misdeeds of Darika, he became infuriated and created the goddess Bhadrakali to kill the demon. Full of wrath, he opened his fiery third eye, and the enormous flaming form of Bhadrakali emerged. When Siva requested Bhadrakali to destroy Darika, she went through the forest and sought the help of Vetalam, an insatiably bloodthirsty female ghoul, along with the other bloodthirsty ghosts and spirits who lived there. When Darika saw Bhadrakali and her female army

coming, he only laughed and dismissed her, forgetting that his boon of invincibility did not prevent his being killed by a woman. During the fierce battle, the bloodthirsty Vetalam drank Darika's blood as Bhadrakali and her assistants beheaded him. Bhadrakali, full of wrath and excitement, returned home to Kailasa with the head of Darika in her left hand. Her father Siva attempted to calm her wrath by dancing naked before her and offering her worship. She was satisfied and henceforth began to receive offerings from devotees as a boon from Siva.

The themes of aggression and bloodthirstiness characterize Kali in all her known manifestations in South Asia, and have been commented upon extensively.[5] In the Kerala context, it is noteworthy that Bhadrakali/Bhagavati (the two names are considered almost interchangeable by most devotees, though Bhadrakali is the fiercer form) is closely associated with the persona of the *yaksi*, a vampiric succubus. Malayali films and novels continually rehash the ancient folklore of *yaksis*, unhappy, seductive and bloodthirsty female tree spirits out to entice and destroy upstanding, virtuous men.[6]

Real virgin girls and mature women are associated with *yaksis* in the male imagination. Most men that I interviewed believed that unmarried women, as well as married women whose husbands are away (30–40 per cent of the adult male population leave Kerala to work for long periods in the Persian Gulf, returning home only briefly each year or two), are voraciously sexual, and that they secretly desire the attentions and teasing of men. George, a married man in his 30s explained to me, through a male translator, that 'in the olden days people believed that when they slept . . . these kinds of people [virgins] would come in dreams and have [sex] with us . . . [producing] nocturnal emissions. . . . These kinds of people enter our body, and cause us to ooze [fluid]. They drain us and drink it. That's the belief.'[7]

The deity Bhadrakali herself is conceived of in Kerala as an unmarried, virgin girl — beautiful, hot, and dangerous — and is also clearly associated with *yaksis*. Like women in the 'hot' conditions of menstruation and pregnancy, she too receives cooling offerings of bananas, coconut, and rice. These please and placate her. Her heat is directly associated with her virgin state, and, like the *yaksis* and virgins of dreams, her desire and anger make her thirsty for male life-fluids. In folktales and legends, the *yaksi* is a

vampire, drinking the blood of her victims while seducing them; but George's statement makes the symbolism more explicit: it is *semen* which the virgin demoness wants from her victim. This essential fluid fertilizes and cools the hot female womb, but weakens and drains the man who gives it — in the *yaksi* stories, even to the point of death. The motif of drinking blood is clearly a symbolic displacement of the intaking of semen by the vagina, and in some stories and medical pronouncements the two fluids are interchangeable.[8] In the *Darikavadham* story, for example, the demon Darika has the boon of reproducing himself *ad infinitum*: each drop of his blood that falls upon the earth immediately springs up into a thousand more of himself. Because of this ability, he is known as *raktabijasura*: blood-seed-demon.

Bijam in Malayalam (the language of Kerala) means reproductive seed or semen. It is possessed by both males and females, and is closely related to blood. In folk conceptions of reproductive physiology, it is by heating the body and arousing sexual desire that both males and females produce (or 'ooze', in George's words) their sexual fluids — that of the woman in the form of blood, and that of the man as semen. The mixing of these two emotionally-generated fluids leads to fertilization and life. Thus the heat of the female's desire is requisite to conception, but this process inevitably requires a 'sacrifice' of the male to the female, an offering of his life fluids that is tantamount to blood sacrifice and leaves him somehow less vital, closer to death.

This sacrifice of essential male fluids is enacted in the remainder of the story: Darika is conquered by Kali, who takes the help of the insatiably bloodthirsty Vetalam, a horrible female forest ghost. Her enormous tongue spreads over the entire battlefield, and as Kali kills Darika, Vetalam laps up the endless river of blood so that no more Darikas can be born from the contact of his blood with the earth. Thus Darika is destroyed by the direct controversion of his infinite autofertility: his *yaksi*/demon/vampire/virgin opponents 'drain and drink' his precious life fluids (to recall George's phrase), thus destroying his vitality and killing him.[9]

Bhagavati's sexuality is expressed in a vividly oral idiom. Her phallic sword and outstretched tongue express her anger, and the authoritarian pole of the mother's personality, which punishes transgression by inflicting physical pain.[10] But the goddess's protruding tongue also marks the desire pole of the mother's

personality, a symbol of her insatiable blood thirst. As a *yaksi* prototype, she is essentially a vampire. Her primary means of sexual satisfaction is the oral ingestion of a man's vital life fluid, *bijam* or blood/semen. The essential rituals of the Bhagavati cult all point to aggressive and fatal erotic drinking of the male by the female: the infamous orgy of blood sacrifice of male 'cocks' at the Kodungallur Bhagavati temple; the male *veliccappatu*'s cutting off of his head in a symbolic act of self-castration; the offering of *guruti* (a blood substitute made from turmeric, calcified lime, and water); and the story of Vetalam all emphasize Bhagavati's erotic, killing thirst.[11]

Two types of psychoanalytic interpretations have been proferred to explain the common imagery of the fierce goddess seen here. One is that the goddess represents a 'phallic mother' redolent of the aggressive image of the primal scene. Alternatively, she represents the envied mother's introjection of the father's penis. Wulff (1982) summarizes this argument:

> [Kali] is herself, first of all, a phallic being, the mother-with-a-penis: she stands triumphantly erect on Siva's body, sword raised, fingers pointed, and eyes and tongue protruding. At the same time, draped with severed heads and hands, she is the bloodied image of the castrating and menstruating (thus castrated) female (1982: 290–1).

In this type of analysis the phallic attributes of the goddess disguise castration anxieties ultimately directed toward the father as well as homosexual desire for the father's penis. Following Freud, such analyses stress the father-son polarity of the oedipal conflict as the central trauma seeking expression.[12]

A second type of psychoanalytic framework stresses the mother-son dyad of the oedipal triangle. Sudhir Kakar (1978) follows Klein in interpreting Kali's desire to devour male semen/blood as a reverse projection of the infant male's desire to devour the mother's breast, and his fear of her retribution for his cannibalistic impulses. Kakar's account emphasizes the redirected eroticism of the mother onto her son as a substitute for insufficient sexual satisfaction in her marital relationship; the breastfeeding relationship becomes the site of this intense, intimate erotic tie. Kakar also clearly points out the ambivalent reaction of the boy, who both desires to sate his mother's erotic needs and is frightened by her inappropriate affect. Although this position is controversial, there

is a great deal of evidence for the highly erotized maternal/son tie in most psychoanalytic studies of South Asia.[13]

If Kakar's position is valid, the *veliccappatu*'s self-mutilation can easily be seen as super-ego punishment for his taboo erotic desire for the mother.[14] His cutting of his own head in a symbolic act of self-castration provides the goddess/mother figure with the male life fluids she requires to sate her aggressive sexual desire. The mother's excessive sexuality is perceived in infantile terms, as an oral need. The goddess needs to drink male fluids because the boy needs to drink maternal ones; as the oral is the only erotic idiom known to the child in this early pre-oedipal dependency phase, the reverse projection takes on an oral dimension.

A corollary hypothesis is that a posture of dependency keeps the mother from getting angry and forces her into a conciliatory mood. Another important variant of the ending of the story in Kerala is that the goddess's anger is calmed by the sight of the baby Ganesh placed in the doorway of Kailasam (heaven). Picking the male baby up, milk begins to flow in Kali's breasts and her mood is suddenly transformed from one of anger to one of peaceful motherly love, as she suckles him.[15] In this alternate ending to the *Darikavadham* story, the fierce goddess is cooled down when she sees a crying baby. She *must* give up her anger and suckle the male child when he is helpless and weak. In this view, ritualized masochistic behavior (symbolic self-castration, beheading of sacrificial male animals, actual self-punishment) offered to the goddess is a powerful form of psychic manipulation. The masochistic worshipper inflicts suffering upon himself to compel maternal love and nurturance.[16] This strategy makes sense in the light of statements I collected from male informants about mothers who strike their children in anger and then immediately cuddle and soothe them upon seeing their distress. Trawick's evidence from Tamil Nadu also supports such a possibility. She describes the 'torturing' of the most beloved children as a form of intense interaction which is at the core of the Tamil concept of family love.[17] Such childrearing practices no doubt create a deep unconscious association between suffering (physical and mental) and nurturance, acceptance, and love. Masochistic, dependent behavior could easily become erotically exciting in such a context of affective training.[18]

The goddess's breastfeeding also has a strong erotic component

which resonates with the personal experience of many adult Kerala men. The psychic importance of breastfeeding to males in traditional Malayali culture cannot be overestimated. All of the troupe leaders and artisans I interviewed who were over the age of 40 recalled having been breastfed at least until the age of four; some until eight years of age. Appu Kuttan recalled:

> I drank until I was seven. I was the last child. When I came back from school I'd have to get on her lap and drink. She wore no upper clothes, only a light towel. Women did not wear blouses then.

Until the 1950s, most women in Kerala did not cover their breasts but wore only a simple lower cloth tied at the waist. Although the sight of female breasts would thus have been more or less commonplace, their erotic importance was not diminished by their nudity. The contemporary intensity of male erotic interest in women's breasts (now modestly covered by saris and blouses) which was revealed in observation, interviews, and folklore does not seem likely to be a recent phenomenon. We can perhaps never know what it was really like fifty years ago, but evidence from novels of the period suggests that gazing at a woman's exposed breasts has always been erotically stimulating for young men.[19]

For a young boy of seven or eight, well past his oedipal phase, daily breastfeeding certainly cannot serve much of a nutritional function. In fact this sensual physical contact might well be one of the only forms of positive engagement with the mother if childrearing accounts from the region are accurate. Trawick and Mencher emphasize the need to hide and avoid overt expressions of parental affection, for instance.[20] Under such conditions one would imagine that the sight and feel of the mother's breasts would be highly arousing and emotionally cathected, being the sole form of physical contact expressing maternal attachment.

Vasan Achari, an accomplished painter and sculptor who makes costumes for Bhagavati ritual performances, often paints the goddess as a young, erotically appealing mother with a raised bodice, a young boy suckling her exposed breasts. In fact such a painting graces the street sign at the entrance to his studio. When we asked him to explain the image, Achari said:

> The meaning of the painting is that she is like a mother. She is depicted as Saraswati, who is the mother of the arts. So that artist who is drinking from that mother's breast, that's myself.

Achari had also produced a very erotically appealing painted wooden breastpiece as a costume to be worn by a male in a ritual performance offered to the goddess in a nearby temple. Again the huge, round, firm breasts were portrayed bulging out from beneath a tight raised blue bodice. In fact many iconic portraits of Bhagavati in Kerala temples show her in this fashion, with a raised bodice exposing the breasts, or with no breast covering at all. The Tirumandankunnu Bhagavati, who is the epitome of the goddess in her cool, loving, breastfeeding mood, is shown with the raised bodice, for example. When asked if the goddess's breasts have any special power or significance, Achari related the following story:

> No special power (*sakti*), but she doesn't care to cover them, that's all. She doesn't try to hide them. Then the breasts have a special beauty. Maybe that's why they have been exposed by the artists. In Chenganessery there is a temple. The deity installed there is Bhadrakali. The idol there was made with a naked breast. So there in a neighborhood house, a Christian boy made a comment, in fun, 'This is good to hold, and good to suck' when he saw that. So that same night in his bedroom a very beautiful lady appeared. He was scared. She made him suck her breast forcefully. Of course she forced him and after he drank it he died. After that those people abandoned that place. It is a true story, a recent incident that happened in the temple.

Achari's account reiterates the themes of taboo sexual desire for the mother's breast (displaced onto a Christian, whose lack of respect is thus understandable if still reprehensible), and retribution in death as punishment for this desire, just as Kakar suggests. The oral themes of desire, drinking, and death constantly converge in the body of the goddess.

The costume of Bhadrakali in traditional ritual dramas (such as *mudiyettu* and *teyyam*) also features prominent breasts, made either of jackwood or coconut. These rounded breasts, painted bright red, are often encircled by wooden snakes, with reared heads poised at the neckline of the actor. Other evidence strongly suggests the correlation of Bhadrakali with snakes. The songs and portraits of the goddess often portray her as covered with snakes, and her headgear, the *mudi*, consists of numerous erect snakes with mouths open, encircling her head. This iconography is

clearly related to that of Jaina *nagas* and *nagayaksis*, snake deities who are undoubtedly Bhadrakali's prototype in Kerala.

Snake worship is extremely prevalent in Kerala. Almost every home has a snake grove, and offerings of milk, eggs, and other substances are frequently made there to avert *sarpa kopam*, the anger of the serpents. *Sarpa kopam* can manifest as general misfortunes afflicting a family, as rashes of the skin, blindness, or other eye illnesses. Most seriously, a person may be bitten by a snake and most likely will die. Snake bites are quite common in Kerala, and in fact a woman well known to me died of snake bite during my stay there. Several large snake temples exist in Kerala, with resident female priestesses.[21] The ritual of *sarpam tullal* is frequently conducted in southern Kerala, and includes possession of virgin girls by the snake deities. P.S. Ramachandran, a *sarpam tullal* artist, states that 'the girls' minds are identical with the snakes' minds'.[22] Many people I interviewed expressed similar sentiments, saying that snakes normally possess only females, especially youthful, unmarried ones.

What connects these seemingly disparate features of the snake cult: young girls, anger, possession, skin and eye diseases, and offerings of milk and eggs? Joseph Alter's illuminating discussion of Nag Panchami in Maharashtra helps to clarify the underlying symbolic connections to be made in Kerala. In his study of celibate wrestlers, Alter (1992) notes that snakes are symbols of erotic sexuality, but of a particular sort, that is, the insatiable passion of the female. Rituals performed on Nag Panchami 'address the problem of sexual danger' (p. 139). The dangerous aspect of sexuality which snakes embody is not passion *per se*, but excessive or illicit passion, which is conceived of as a potent, destructive force. This force is considered to be particularly lodged in the female body:

> [W]restlers regard snakes as the symbolic equivalent of lustful women. . . . In this aspect snakes are associated with rabid female sexual energy which, in the view of many Indian men, is both physically and psychologically debilitating. That women are not allowed to enter the *akhara* [gymnasium] precinct is witness to the threat they pose (Alter 1992: 146).

Alter goes on to explain the symbolic connections wrestlers draw between feminine lust and the peculiar properties of snakes: both

are considered to be orally dangerous, sucking out precious life fluids: 'From a wrestler's perspective, having sex with a women [sic] is like being sucked dry by a snake' (p. 146). In a familiar symbolic displacement, in which the female genitals become mouthlike, and the discharge of semen into the vagina becomes a kind of drinking act by the female body, orality again becomes the dominant erotic paradigm. The snake is an ideal symbol for sexuality in such a context, with its prodigious orality: the snake takes its prey whole into its mouth, kills it by swallowing it, and also kills by biting or spewing poison.

In Kerala, there is no doubt that these themes surface in the association of virgin girls with snakes. Virgin girls, like *yaksis*, are believed by men to be uncontrollably sexual and 'thirsty' for male semen. The symptoms associated with *sarpa kopam* (wrath of snakes) now become comprehensible. The anger of the snakes is aroused when they are denied satisfaction, just like the *yaksi*. Female possession, with its heat, loss of body control, shouting of obscenities, and loosened hair, clearly expresses this uncontrolled dangerous passion. The somatic symbolism of possession, in which a phallic entity (the snake spirit) enters the body of a woman, should not be difficult to understand as a metaphor for sexual intercourse.[23]

Skin and eye ailments are the snakes' punishment for the selfish emotions of pride, envy, and desire. The skin and eyes are of course receptive organs, whose potential for erotic arousal is well developed in Indian literature and art. Itching of the skin is considered in folk medical conceptions to be a sign of repressed desire, as are the pustulant eruptions of pox diseases and acne. Scratching is also a common form of love play described in Indian erotic literature, including the *Silappadikaram*, an ancient South Indian novel.[24] Eyes are also highly erotic. Diana Eck has demonstrated the interactive properties of seeing as a form of 'touch' at length in her well-known book *Darsan* (1981). Desire and love are conventionally communicated through the meeting of eyes throughout India. The third eye of Siva is full of fire, and functions as both a destructive and procreative organ. Bhadrakali in Kerala is born from Siva's fiery third eye, which also is the site of the fire which punishes the god Kama (lust) when he attempts to arouse Siva from his meditations.[25] The third eye contains the destructive fire of desire, but as a procreative

organ is also a kind of supernatural male vagina.[26] A story told to me by a ritual actor who plays the part of Bhadrakali in *mudiyettu* illustrates this point well: Parvati was jealous of Siva's third eye, so she started applying red power to the same spot in the center of her forehead. This remarkable reversal of the obvious male cooption of the female genital in Siva's iconography also sheds light on the symbolism of the *bindi* (*pottu, tilak*) worn by Hindu married women, as a sign of ambivalent female genital potential. The 'evil eye' so frequently attributed to barren females and jealous people also makes sense in this light as an overheated, desirous female organ.

In Kerala eyes are common symbolic equivalents of breasts in the costumes of *patayani*, a southern art form dedicated to Bhadrakali. In fact the enormous eyes cover the entire figure of the goddess. In Malayalam, the term for the nipple is *mulakanni*, 'eye of the breast'. The male erotic gaze and oral desire, fixated on the female breast, is transformed through reverse projection: the breast itself becomes a receptive, devouring eye, homologous to the vagina in its ambivalent potential. This same reversal is present in the tantric motif of vaginas covering the body, found in the mythology of Long-Tongue below, and in the transsexual meditations of the nineteenth century Hindu mystic Ramakrishna.[27] As Roland (1988) suggests, this motif may express in vivid metaphor the idea that 'all eyes are upon' the young, attractive female body, whose very attractiveness is then somehow its own fault.[28] In male fantasy, the breasts, vagina, and eyes equally share the frightening properties of female erotic organs: all contain the feminine heat of desire which can be destructive to males, all are receptive and 'take in' (devour) their objects.

What of the offerings of milk? The snake's thirst is quenched, and its dangerous passion neutralized, by the ingestion of milk. Alter discusses this feature of snake worship as it relates to the belief that 'a pregnant woman can render a snake powerless (or blind)':

> Here the power of fertility overcomes the power of sexuality in either its male or female guise. The pregnant woman poses a threat to snakes . . . because, on a symbolic level, fertility is the inverse of erotic sexuality. Milk, then, becomes the dominant symbol, and energy is redirected away from sex to nurturing growth. The symmetry of poison and milk is intriguing, for . . . milk (representative of a

> pregnant or fertile woman) can ritually neutralize poison. . . . Women are not categorically dangerous, only contingently so as either strangers or wives. It is only their erotic qualities which are snakelike. . . . Maternity neutralizes passion. . . . (1992: 146).

The purpose of feeding milk to snakes then becomes comprehensible: 'milk is the symbolic opposite of erotic passion and . . . feeding milk to snakes functions as a neutralizing agency. Dangerous female passion is cooled and rendered less threatening by the symbolic juxtaposition of milk and poison' (p. 150).

Milk and breastfeeding are then auspicious female symbols of maternal nurturance and fertility, opposed to the heated, desirous, draining and drinking orality of the passionate virgin female. But as Alter and O'Flaherty amply demonstrate, milk and breastfeeding are also symbolically transformed in the male imagination into semen and phallus. Milk and semen are both considered refined forms of blood, and are symbolically interchangeable forms of condensed human energy. The ascetic male who retains his semen becomes like a pregnant female with breasts and swollen belly; the semen rises like cream to his head and produces extraordinary psychic powers.[29] In fact the ascetic Siva contains in his body both male and female power, as his third eye clearly indicates. Not only are the fluids of milk and semen symbolic equivalents, but the act of 'milking' or breastfeeding becomes a symbolic equivalent to the draining of semen from the phallus in intercourse.

We can now begin to unravel the strange symbolism of Vetalam's tongue in the *Darikavadham* story. Siva Raman Marar told the story of Vetalam's tongue like this:

> So it is assumed that the tongue of Vetalam is spread on the battlefield. The blood of Darika shouldn't fall on the ground. If one drop of blood spills on the ground, one thousand *asuras* [demons] will be born. That is why Bhadrakali takes help from Vetalam and spreads her tongue on the battlefield. Only then the whole *asura* family will be destroyed. Otherwise each drop will give birth to a thousand *asuras*. A face of Vetalam is tied on the waist of the actor. In this, you can see only the head of Vetalam and the tongue hanging down. There is no limit for the length of Vetalam's tongue. It is told like this in Malayalam. It can elongate to any extent. It is a sort of monster like that. So Vetalam is brought to the battlefield with the agreement that she will be given any amount of blood she needs. Bhadrakali

> fights standing on Darika's neck. That is the significance of tying this on the waist. When the war starts, all the blood will be falling only on Vetalam's tongue. So no more *asuras* will be born. It is for that Vetalam is brought.

Vetalam here seems to be closely related to the mythical demoness Long-Tongue, identified by O'Flaherty as a precursor of Kali.[30] In the *Jaiminiya Brahmana*, Long-Tongue aggressively ingests the juice (*soma*) offered to the gods in the Vedic fire ritual. Her aggressive sexuality is graphically expressed in the presence of vaginas all over her body; she is slain by a male who is magically granted multiple penises 'on every limb' and who thus locks her down and kills her.[31] Vetalam clearly represents Bhadrakali's most out-of-control and bloodthirsty side.

A number of features of Siva Raman Marar's version alert us to an important meaning of Vetalam's long tongue. First, the tongue hangs in the location of the female character's vagina; but as the actor is actually a man, its shape, location, and inexhaustible length identify the tongue as an obvious phallic symbol. The iconography of the fierce goddess throughout India shows her sitting astride a lion, tiger, or other carnivorous cats. The lion mount of one goddess closely related to Bhagavati, Mookambika Devi of southern Karnataka, is shown in a frontal position which makes it appear as if the mouth of the lion is her vagina. In fact I would suggest that this is the meaning of the Devi's carnivorous feline mount: it symbolizes the uncontrollable, devouring, killing hunger of the female organ.[32] Vetalam's carnivorous, voracious tongue seems to be equivalent to an exaggerated clitoris, a sign of the goddess's excessive, aggressive sexuality. The tongue is phallic but it also drinks. The tongue licks Darika's *bijam* from his severed neck, preventing his autoprocreation by the ingestion of the blood-semen. What we have then is a strange form of *oral sex conducted by a drinking phallus.*

In fact the imagery of Kali, which has often been interpreted by psychoanalytic writers as a 'phallic mother' fused from frightening observations of the 'primal scene', is better explained as a male projective fantasy about feminine sexuality: what a man imagines he would feel like inside a young female body. Kali/Vetalam's long tongue bears no real relation to feminine sexuality — women don't have long, erectile organs. The phallic imagery of Kali does

not reflect feminine experience but a kind of male sexuality imagined into a female body. It is a transsexual fantasy, not spiritually transcendent androgyny, which Kali expresses in this context.

The androgynous fantasy of Kali arises from extreme feminine identification. Men imagine themselves 'as if' they were women. Ritual actors, who share with many males in their culture an erotic mother fixation centered around the breasts, are in the unique position of being culturally sanctioned to enact their fantasy in the possession drama. The possession itself can be seen as a defensive reaction to the intense psychic merging with the mother provoked by the transvestite performance. The regressive male sexuality typical of the pre-oedipal phase expresses a striving for *thanatos*, not *Eros*, a return to the womb, a kind of obliteration of self in the mother's persona. This is why Kali requires the death of her victim/devotee, either actually or symbolically. The oral aggressive drives of the devotee of Kali propel him toward his own death in a return to the womb. By simultaneously castrating his male, erotic self (cutting of the head of the male aggressor Darika), offering the blood/semen to Kali/mother, and then as the mother, drinking it (receiving the sacrifice), the actor resolves his ambivalent regressive feelings in a complex form of 'acting out'.

This oedipal drama of mother-son love and hatred appears to completely circumvent the father's role. However it is hidden in the prevalent legends of actors playing Kali actually having decapitated actors playing Darika: these actors would always be in a relation of uncle to nephew or father to son. But the oedipal conflict is still portrayed as father killing son, not the other way around. Obeyesekere has noted this peculiarly South Asian resolution of oedipal conflict through submission to the father rather than rejection of him in *The Work of Culture* (1990).[33] We may note that in the Bhagavati cult ritual dramas, the male actor (whose kinship relation to his fellow actor/opponent is of *father* or mother's brother), disguised as *mother*, kills *son*. The fused mother/father/Kali also never marries or is subdued by a male, as she is in myths of surrounding regions of South India. As in Sri Lanka, the oedipal conflict is resolved entirely through extreme feminine identification and denial of the father. We shall return to these themes at the end of this paper.

To summarize the complex psychological process we have

traced, male gynophobia, originating in the trauma of excessive mother fixation, manifests in a splitting of defenses into 'vagina-phobia' and regressive, positive oral fixation. The positive valence of the breast, exuding life-giving milk, is opposed to the negative valence of the vagina, which is perceived as a hot, thirsty, destructive, snakelike mouth, drinking precious male semen and emitting the poison of menstrual blood. Furthermore, the phallus is equated to the breast, semen to milk, ejaculation to feeding. The natural next step in this symbolic process is that fellatio is functionally equivalent but affectively superior to breastfeeding.

Such an equation is most spectacularly demonstrated by Herdt for Sambia, New Guinea male initiation (1981). In Sambia, a similar mother fixation and concomitant horror of women and vaginal intercourse has contributed to the development of an elaborate cult of ritual fellatio. Without recounting Herdt's entire corpus of work here, we can simply note, along with Obeyesekere, the 'parallelism between Sambia and India (or Sri Lanka)' in 'the utilization of regression where the symbolic system is close to motivational sources' (1990: 61). I disagree with Obeyesekere's assertion, however, that 'in India direct semen ingestion occurs only in the rare idiosyncratic case'. While noting the similarities in Sambia and Indian (perhaps particularly South Indian) ritual solutions to similar developmental problems, Obeyesekere states that 'Sambia ingestion of semen in homosexual fellatio, along with similar rites at puberty, directly tap deep motivations, whereas the Indian ones progressively move away from them' (p. 61). Although a culturally sanctioned, institutionalized system of ritual fellatio certainly does not exist in India as it does in Sambia, I believe there are more similarities between the two societies than Obeyesekere recognizes.

In our discussion of Vetalam's tongue above, we stated that Vetalam/Kali's licking of Darika's blood/semen is a kind of oral sex (even birth control) conducted by a drinking phallus in an act of *symbolic magical fellatio*. Alter's discussion of the suckling snake once again illuminates the symbolic underpinnings of this transformation:

> In this imagery the more common roles are reversed. The breast becomes the phallus from which semen rather than milk is sucked out. . . . On one level the snake sucks out the mother's nurturing

> milk, but on a parallel symbolic plane it sucks out vital male energy. . . . As the snake drinks milk it is associated with both the good mother's flowing milk and the bad mother's passion. On one plane the suckling snake is a potent symbol of erotic fantasy, but it is also, on another plane, emblematic of the the non-erotic, symbiotic relationship between mother and child (1992: 147).

In other words, the snake can have its milk and eat it too. Phallic in shape, the snake ingests milk/semen in a neutralization of female passion. The impressive orality of the snake, which takes its prey whole into its mouth and swallows it, suggests a fellatio image. Offerings of milk and eggs, androgynous semen substitutes, further reinforce this association. The snake's phallic shape, combined with its drinking, fellating capacity, make it a perfect symbol of a 'self-feeding breast'. The snake eating milk is like an inert phallus which retains ('eats') and thus restores its own semen. Alter (1992) and Cantlie (1977) both impressively demonstrate the importance of this retention of semen for celibate and ascetic males, who paranoically avoid contact with females; and Alter, quoting O'Flaherty, points out that such semen-withholding ascetics are believed to have power over snakes (as symbols of aggressive female sexuality) (1992: 150).

The act of feeding milk to snakes achieves this self-contained system. As Alter explains, 'the snake reingests . . . the symbolic semen that it has been milked of' (1992: 149–50). The mythic serpent Ananta, a snake sucking its own tail, symbolizes this perpetual motion of life fluids without loss to the female. For wrestlers, this male self-control awakens the enlightening kundalini power (the serpent energy within the human body) in a kind of 'internal ejaculation . . . equivalent, on a symbolic plane, to the alchemical recycling of milk/semen/milk' (p. 150). The snake with its tail in its mouth achieves the desired ingestion of positively valent life fluids, love, nurturance, affect, and food, without losing to females psychologically or physically.

Alter draws the connection between this image of the snake with its tail in its mouth and the 'self-feeding breast' discussed by Klein (1948, 1957) and O'Flaherty (1980, 1984). Klein sees the self-feeding breast as the prototypical image of envy. By fantasizing such an organ in himself, the regressive male appropriates the feminine good object (loving mother) without the feminine bad object (desirous, engulfing, milk-withholding mother).

While O'Flaherty may regard this 'recycling' of semen by the 'ouroboros snake [as] a symbol of the paradoxical Mobius universe which is infinite but self-contained' (1984: 242–3, cited in Alter 1992: 150), it also, more prosaically, expresses a gynophobic homosexual fantasy of fellatio which ingeniously cuts women out of the sexual loop. In Sambia we have seen that similar psychological motivations result in a cult of actual homosexual fellatio. Is there any evidence for such behavior in Kerala?

On a mythical level, we can certainly answer in the affirmative. The cult of Lord Ayyappan, a male deity of Kerala, is redolent with homosexual and gynophobic themes, from the transvestite homosexual pairing of Siva and Visnu which results in his conception, to the fanatical celibacy of devotees, and the collusive sadistic denial of Ayyappan's feminine suitor gleefully performed by the male pilgrims to the shrine.[34] In the *mudiyettu* ritual drama, the grotesque female clown Kuli aggressively chases young males in the audience, places them in her lap, and forces one of her huge, pointed red 'breasts' into the victim's mouth in a parody of breastfeeding. Of course Kuli is played by a man, her 'breasts' are sharp, pointed, and phallic in appearance, and her passive, hysterically laughing victims are very often the black-garbed, celibate Ayyappa pilgrims during the month of Dhanu (December–January).[35]

As far as actual homosexual activity and practice, it is naturally a difficult subject about which to make general statements. My impressionistic view, based on friendships, observations, jokes and folklore I collected, as well as extensive interviews with young unmarried men, is that homosexual activity is not only present but very common in Kerala. As in Sambia, it tends to occur in the adolescent phase of life, giving way to heterosexual relations after marriage. Only for a few does homosexuality become a permanent lifestyle; and, as in most of India, it is absolutely socially unacceptable, and must be conducted in secret.

One twenty-one year old male (unmarried) with whom I had established a trusting relationship, was willing to comment on this question. The interchange follows:

> Q: Would you say that homosexual relations are very common here in Kerala?
> A: No I have not seen them very often. But in Trichur in that round

in [the centre of town], there are people in a certain space. They go and suck this thing and all.
Q: How can you recognize a homosexual here?
A: They walk and talk in an effeminate way. We call them 'flutes'. There was a guy who used to tutor boys from 9:30 at night until 2:30 in the morning. So when I used to come from home to go to this guy's tuition centre, I would get down from the bus in the round and walk. And one day a guy came up to me saying, 'Brother, brother!' He was begging, 'Can I sing for you? Can I sing for you? I sing well.' It means: 'Can I suck your cock?' I was afraid of him. I ran away from there.
Q: But it seems from what you told me earlier that most men have had at least one homosexual experience, that it's not uncommon at a certain phase of your life for people to have it.
A: If he has lived in a hostel. When I was in school, when I was in the 10th standard, I was forced to lie for the senior students. They just bully you, 'Come on, lay, otherwise. . . .' You'll have to lay like a vegetable, otherwise they're going to kick you. You can't go and complain also. They just say, 'You go and complain.' They don't care.

Another friend in his late twenties (unmarried) said that he had been introduced to sex by his older male cousin, who molested him and his brothers every time the cousin stayed over at their house. 'We all had to all sleep in the same bed and we dreaded it because he would always seduce us.' He never told anyone. Another young man had learned about semen from a teenage male cousin who had him perform fellatio under a table or behind a couch. Young boys who hung around this man, now in his late twenties, seemed to fall in love with him. He claimed these boys wanted to fellate him; he just allowed that 'to satisfy them'. The same man also related that he had often written in his journal about his frequently angry mother as Bhadrakali.

This spotty, impressionistic set of remarks is not meant to prove anything definitively, but simply to hear the voices of some young men who have observed or experienced homosexual relations in Kerala. Their comments reveal the abusive nature of many of the contacts, forcefully and secretly propagated on them as children; as well as the almost 'pathologically excessive restrictions on [adolescent] libidinal life' (Masson 1976: 624) forced on young people in Kerala, which perhaps encourage homosexual contacts in lieu of access to heterosexual ones (especially in school

hostels). It is interesting to note in the context of this chapter that the majority of homosexual behavior was described not as anal but *oral*; that is to say, fellatio is by far the preferred mode of its expression, as evidenced in the epithet 'flutes' for homosexual fellator/prostitutes in the Trichur round. The service proferred by the homosexual prostitutes is sucking (fellating their clients). This suggests that it is *being sucked* which men find most erotically exciting.

The prevalence of homosexual fellatio in adolescent males apparently leads to a preference for this mode of sexual pleasure after marriage as well. Oral sex appears to be an important part of Kerala sexual relations. My younger male informants admitted that most men really like fellatio, and want their wives to do it. Folk knowledge is that soon after her marriage, a young woman starts to get fat because 'she is drinking a lot of semen and it is very nutritious, so they get fat'. One young man even described the proper technique for fellatio, saying it should be 'like the way a baby drinks from the breast — a strong sucking motion'. When I asked this man if he had heard that breast feeding gives a woman sexual pleasure, he was unfamiliar with that idea. But about fellatio, he asserted, 'Most women love to do that'.[36]

A more extreme case was related to me by a married man in his mid-thirties. He told me of a *veliccappatu* (oracle) from the Kodungallur Bhagavati temple who felt revulsion for his wife and divorced her. He became completely identified with Bhagavati and began to be an active homosexual. My friend explained: '*He performs fellatio and he gets a special energy from that.* He becomes intoxicated, furious. During *Bharani*, while under *vrittam* (vows), he wanders and attacks people, and cuts his head until it bleeds.' This *veliccappatu* was, according to my informant, one of the most powerful and gifted associated with the Kodungallur temple.

Whatever the truth value of this account, the motifs of revulsion from women, homosexual fellatio and its magical power to infuriate and enliven, in association with the cultic worship of Bhadrakali at Kodungallur, are striking proof of the symbolic processes we have painstakingly traced in this section. Vetalam's 'drinking phallus', the long tongue lapping up semen, is the snake with the tail in its mouth, eternally ejaculating into itself in a male fantasy of omnipotence. The fact that only males may dress

as and enact the female roles of Kali/Vetalam and Kuli is no coincidence, but further proof of the fantasy of androgyny for which homosexual fellatio is the perfect resolution. Both heterosexual fellatio and breastfeeding from the female, although intensely pleasurable to the male, involve psychologically dangerous and 'life-threatening' interactions which outweigh the psychic comforts they bestow. In actual or fantasied homosexual fellatio, the male becomes the mother with her omnipotent, life-giving breasts, and the loss of semen to the male partner is not problematic in that the female is avoided and only male sexual energies are involved.[37] In heterosexual fellatio, the threatening female becomes the sucking, dependent baby; at the same time the male experiences the satisfaction of penetrating her (oral) cavity with his penis, and thus avoids the vagina. In either case, for the gynophobic male, fellatio is the best of all erotic worlds.

To return to the themes we identified at the beginning of this paper, the male experience of Bhagavati is of a virginal deity characterized by wrath and aggressive sexual desire. We have suggested, in agreement with Kakar, that the intense preoedipal ties to the mother which characterize Kerala males (and possibly South Asian males more generally) lead to a peculiar fixation on the feminine body as both irresistible and murderous. The mother's persona is split into authoritarian/nurturing and sexual polarities, the former reflected in the persona of Bhadrakali and the latter in the persona of Vetalam/Kuli. These conflicting poles are further reflected in the splitting of the feminine sexual body into erotically stimulating and nurturing *breasts*, which while giving intense pleasure also function as organs of domination over the boy, and are hence a site of fear as well as desire; and the devouring *vagina/mouth/eyes* of Vetalam's tongue, Siva's third eye, the pustules of smallpox, and the blindness produced by snake anger. In fact, as we have demonstrated, the entire female body is orally cathected. Male feminine identification focuses on the oral potentiality and threat of the feminine body, converting the breasts and vagina into phallic, self-feeding organs in a homosexual fantasy of fellatio which eliminates females from the loop of sexuality entirely while coopting the oral/sexual pleasures their bodies provide. The guilt of desire for the mother's body is punished by the motif of self-beheading/castration in the guise of the transvestite mother herself and the assumption of a

posture of infantile dependency which converts the mother's sexual anger into benign nurturance.

The imputing of destructive power to the natural biological impulses of women, the avoidance of female genital relations, and the fear of adult sexuality are by now common themes in the psychological literature on South Asia. However, previous psychoanalytic literature on the fierce goddess has tended to insist on the oedipal themes of the primal scene and castration fear from the father as the underlying conflicts disguised in the persona of Kali. The goddess's phallic tongue and sword are interpreted as the introjected, castrating penis of the father. My interpretation recognizes the very distant psychic role of the father in Kerala oedipal process. What father-son oedipal themes can be found are disguised in the motif of Kali-actors decapitating their nephews/sons while enacting the role of Darika. As Obeyesekere (1990) has observed, male confrontation or murder of the father is entirely absent here. Perhaps this indicates extreme repression of hostility toward the father, as some orthodox Freudians insist (Spiro 1982); but I suspect rather that the absence of the father in the early childhood experience redirects the whole spectrum of infantile psychic impulses toward a very intense and multivalent psychic relationship with the mother or her substitutes.

In *The Work of Culture* (1990), Obeyesekere quotes a crucial passage from 'The Ego and the Id', in which Freud expresses the opinion that alternative resolutions to the oedipal complex may exist, including the possibility of male feminine identification and submission to the father in place of the more familiar model of son-father conflict. Portions of this passage bear repeating here:

> In its simplified form the case of the male child may be described as follows: At a very early age the little boy develops an object-cathexis for his mother, which originally related to the mother's breast and is the prototype of an object choice on the anaclitic model. . . . [Eventually] the boy's object-cathexis of his mother must be given up. Its place may be filled by one of two things: *either an identification with his mother or an intensification of his identification with his father. We are accustomed to regard the latter outcome as the more normal.* . . . In this way the dissolution of the Oedipus complex would consolidate the masculinity in the boy's character (Obeyesekere 1990: 85 [Freud 1923: 31–2]).

Obeyesekere goes on to suggest that if Freud had been exposed to Indian patients and myths,

> He would have had little choice but to formulate the positive form of the Indian 'Oedipus' complex in terms of the Indian clinical and mythological data, i.e., in terms of identification with the mother and submission to the father. He would also have noted that this situation would result in the male developing feminine characteristics — enhanced of course by constitutional bisexuality! (1990: 86–7)

Working from this revised premise, our interpretations of the Bhagavati cult rituals are acceptable within the Freudian framework. Leaving behind the obsession with the father's phallus which has dominated most psychoanalytic discussions, we may recognize in the Kerala material extreme male feminine identification which is nonetheless ambivalent. The inextricable poles of domination and desire in the 'erotic circle of kin' which Obeyesekere has identified both convene in the body of the mother for the young son; and this intense object-cathexis never really dissipates for the normal South Asian male.[38]

We also have identified the masochistic elements in the Bhagavati story and its enactments, elements which evolve naturally from this newly-formulated picture of early South Asian male childhood development. The intense erotic tie to the mother, combined with guilt over incestuous feelings and harsh regimes of physical punishment, are the base of masochistic pleasure in South Indian rituals devoted to the goddess. By assuming a position of suffering, need, humiliation, or dependency, the devotee regains the love of the mother. Whether by becoming an infant at her breast or a prone, inert sexual partner (and preferably both), the stories of Kali assert that the male must be dominated and subsumed under feminine control. But such postures of submission to the female occur only in the world of fantasy and ritual, or in the privacy of the bedroom, having no apparent relation to the very strongly patriarchal family structure of most Kerala families, and of the society in general. In daily life, defensive hypermasculinity masks the deep feminine identification which ritual reveals, while social empowerment of living women remains elusive.

Notes

1. The ethnographic field research upon which this essay is based was conducted in Kerala, South India during eighteen months in 1991–2, under the sponsorship of the American Institute of Indian Studies and the Fulbright Foundation. Writing support was provided by the Townsend Center for the Humanities at the University of California, Berkeley during 1993–4.
2. See Claus 1973, 1975; Freeman 1993.
3. The unique Kerala institution of the *veliccappatu* is described in detail by Thampuran (1936).
4. Major elements of the story resemble portions of the *Devi Mahatmyam* and the *Devi Bhagavata Purana*; the *Linga Purana* (1.106) comes close to the Kerala story. The story of the goddess killing of Darika has been published in Sanskrit and Malayalam many times under titles such as *Bhadrakali Mahatmyam*, *Bhadrolpathi*, and *Darukavadham*, but these texts appear to some analysts to be Sanskritized versions of an oral tale.
5. For excellent summary discussions of the literature on Kali, see Kinsley (1975: 81–126) and (1986: 95–211); Erndl (1993: 18–36).
6. See Ramakrishnan 1991 [1967] for an outstanding contemporary example.
7. George is a pseudonym. George is a Christian but has a very intense interest in Hindu religion and folklore. He has an outstanding collection of folk masks and is somewhat of a local authority on folk religion.
8. Cf. O'Flaherty (1980: 33–5); Shulman (1980: 103).
9. Many scholars have studied the pervasive theme of male sacrifice in the mythology of the Hindu fierce goddess; notable among them Shulman (1980: 176–316); and Kinsley (1986: 95–122, 200–8). Psychoanalytic treatments include Carstairs (1958: 156–69); Kakar (1978: 52–112); Obeyesekere (1981: 1–51 passim, 150–59); and O'Flaherty (1980: 81–129).
10. For a different interpretation in the cultural setting of Bengal, see Menon and Shweder (1994).
11. For an extensive historical study of the Kodungallur temple and *Bharani* festival, see Induchoodan (1969); also Gentes (1992). For a description of the other Bhagavati cult rituals, see Thampuran (1936).

12. Carstairs (1958); Chaudhuri (1956); Obeyesekere (1981); Spratt (1977 [1966]).
13. See Carstairs (1958); Kakar (1990).
14. Crapanzano (1973) interprets a nearly identical ritual in Morocco as a feminization which serves passive homosexual needs *vis-à-vis* the father. Although it may be accurate for Morocco, this traditional Freudian posture, emphasizing the male-male dimension of the oedipal conflict, is precisely what we wish to controvert in the South Asian context presented here.
15. The erotic meaning of breastfeeding as a regressive form of sexual union with the mother is amply demonstrated for south Indian/Sri Lankan materials by Obeyesekere (1990: 114–22). We shall explore this defensive reaction to oedipal desire more fully below.
16. Asch (1988: 95).
17. Trawick (1990a: 47–50).
18. Coen (1988); Galenson (1988: 196–203); Kernberg (1988).
19. See Nair (1975).
20. Trawick (1990a, 1990b); Mencher (1963).
21. The snake shrine at Mannarsala is the main such temple.
22. 'Lord of the Dance', in series 'Dancing.' KQED television, 1993.
23. See Sered (1994); Obeyesekere (1977, 1981).
24. Ilankovatikal (1965).
25. See Cantlie (1977: 250).
26. LaBarre (1984: 97).
27. Kripal (1994: 156–7).
28. Roland (1988: 264).
29. Cantlie (1977); O'Flaherty (1980: 43–8).
30. O'Flaherty (1985: 101–3); cited in Kripal (1994: 156, note 10).
31. Kripal (1994: 156–7).
32. Cf. Fuller (1993: 290).
33. This is the classic 'negative Oedipus complex'. See Kurtz (1992: 135–42, 223–6) for review of this psychoanalytic position in studies of South Asia.
34. See Daniel (1984); Caldwell (1995).
35. See Caldwell (1995) for further discussion of the Kuli scene.
36. However Mary Mohan, a Delhi gynecologist of Malayali parentage who practiced for 14 years in Kerala, states that although 'men both young and middle aged enjoy oral sex [w]omen,

especially wives, do not like or encourage it. It is an act which most men indulge in out of the confines of the marriage'. (Personal communication 1994).

37. Herdt describes a similar attitude on the part of Sambia men: '. . . heterosexual intercourse is, as men see it, more draining than homosexual fellatio. Tali said, "A man loses *all* his semen in vaginal intercourse. . . . In fellatio with boys he loses only *half* his water" ' (1981: 249).
38. Obeyesekere (1990: 72ff).

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15

Selfhood in the Indian Context: A Psychoanalytic Perspective

Alfred Collins and Prakash Desai

'Now I am all alone — all alone', he thought.
'In all India is no one so alone as I: If I die today,
who shall bring the news — and to whom?'

'Who is Kim — Kim — Kim?'

Rudyard Kipling, *Kim*

Surely no culture has been more preoccupied with the experiences and concepts of a 'self' than India. Beginning before 1000 BC during the earliest or Vedic period of Indian thought, solutions to India's self-questions have been extremely diverse, ranging from the orthodox Hindu attempts to assert the absoluteness and indestructibility of an inner self or *atman* (which develop from the earlier idea of a world-encompassing Cosmic Man), to the denial of that self's reality or importance in the *anatman* ('no self') doctrine of Buddhism, to various sorts of immanent and transcendent selves (Yoga and theistic Vedanta) and social practices at specific life stages (in the *Dharmasastras*) which provide places for a special kind of self-realization on the margins of life in the world.

Nevertheless, a certain consensus does prevail: concepts of self in India bifurcate early on, and consistently in the classical and modern traditions two sorts of self are opposed to one another. Although there are other concepts, and wide differences of meaning for these two selves in different schools of thought, their opposition is almost universal, and it may be helpful to view them under the rubrics *atman* and *ahamkara*, more or less adequately

translated as 'transcendent self' and 'limited or personal self'. Both terms are present and developing in the early Upanisads (around 700 BC), and have long and rich histories thereafter. *Atman*, although always also a reflexive term as well as a word used for other kinds of selves, comes to refer specifically to a sense of '*I*-ness' independent of, prior to, and transcendent to the flux of temporal change (*samsara*) and the particulars of personality and world. It is also ultimately interior, being for instance compared to a thumb-sized man within the heart.

Ahamkara, literally the 'utterance of the word "I"' (Van Buitenen 1957), became closely related to pride and an inflated sense of personal worth which was thought to result from ignorance of one's true nature. Two words often used with *ahamkara* suggest its narcissistic dimensions: *gaurva*, 'swollen and heavy with a sense of self-importance', and *smaya*, 'the smile of pride of one who receives a compliment or views himself in a mirror, etc.' (definitions from Hulin 1978). Needless to say, *atman* is one of the most (if not *the* most) positively valenced of Indian philosophical terms, while *ahamkara* is one of the deadliest (if not *the* deadliest) of 'sins'.

Full discussions of the early development of the two terms will be found in Renou (1951) for *atman*, and van Buitenen (1957) and Biardeau (1965) for *ahamkara*, while both words have been treated in Hulin's recent book on the Indian self. Briefly, *atman* (possibly cognate with ancient Greek *atmos*, 'breath') began as both a reflexive term ('myself', etc.) and a name for that part of a person which acts as the centre for a set of otherwise discrete parts. Thus, in very early literature, *atman* is used to describe the breathing pulmonary trunk of the body which unites the head, arms and legs. In general, it was the unity, totality or inner life principle or soul of a person, and even later, in the classical tradition, *atman* often retains an implicit reference to the body and its psychological faculties, taken as a whole. From a name for a person's unity, *atman* came to designate a profoundly spiritual, 'numinous' sense of conscious selfhood, very close to many Western definitions of the self or soul.

Ahamkara is a term invented by the priestly authors of the Upanisads. It was used primarily to denote the sense of '*I*-ness' or 'mine-ness' which arises in a creator god at a certain moment in cosmogenesis, the moment after which individuation or

separation of particular entities is an issue or fact. In different ways both *atman* and *ahamkara* name a sense of *I*-ness, while this became understood as positive for transcendent *atman* and negative for worldly *ahamkara*. There is an easy, effortless quality to many descriptions of *atman*, whereas *ahamkara* is typically filled with struggle to claim, assert, or become a self. One could view much of Indian philosophy is an attempt to separate 'true' (*atman*-like) from 'false' (*ahamkara*-like) selfhood.

In this essay, we shall attempt to look more deeply into these ideas, tracing the evolution of the concepts of 'self' by a review of the early Indian literature (Vedas and Upanisads), focusing on the career of the Cosmic Man, Prajapati. Our purpose is to bring together psychoanalytic and ancient Indian theories about the self. We will also try to show that the Indian concerns and formulations are not simply ancient or textual. The parallels in contemporary Indian life are remarkable in their continuity with the ancient tradition. We will further attempt to use psychoanalytic thought to uncover common theoretical grounds for understanding India's diverse views of the self, and will show that *atman* and *ahamkara* can be reconciled by a deeper understanding of their implicit natures and functions.

The Indian concern with selves (especially of the *atman* type) is notorious in the West, and has been debated for the past two hundred years or more by various romantic apologists and tough-minded detractors. These include, respectively, Romain Rolland and Sigmund Freud whose correspondence on the 'oceanic feeling' is well known (Freud 1930).

Some of the most sensitive (and positive) Western views of the Indian sense of an *atman*-self have been those of literary artists: besides Rolland, Forster, Hesse, Kipling, and T.S. Eliot come to mind. Anthropologists, psychologists and psychoanalysts who have recently begun studying the personalities of actual Indians and their social relations have in general been more negative, and have not been persuaded that a stable and definite self, individuality, or ego boundaries exist in Indian thought and personality. Dumont (1970) locates individual selfhood only at the level of society as an organic whole, or in the king or brahman ('priest') who are its centre and source respectively, although he recognizes a second sort of individuality in the world renouncer (*sannyasin*). Marriott interprets Indian understandings of persons

as concerning open 'dividuals' (Inden and Marriott 1977) whose physical and social skins designate only moments in indefinitely ongoing, substantial liquid processes, a dynamic of exchanges (called 'mixing' to the extent that they are irreflexive, that is, externally related; 'marking' when asymmetrical; and 'unmatching' in so far as they lack affinity and are unstable or intransitive) (Marriott 1976, 1990).

Roland (1986) identifies a 'familial self' characterized by partial mergers, as of father and son, but like Dumont also allows for an immanent and transcendent self apart from the familial one. Kakar (1981), from an Eriksonian perspective, identifies an unstable alternation of self-regard between grandiosity and self-devaluation as characteristic of the Indian personality. A.K. Ramanujan (1990), while acknowledging a reality behind the notorious Hindu 'confusion' of what Westerners distinguish as inside/outside, self/other, etc., considers that an Indian cognitive style of 'context sensitivity' has been misinterpreted as a psychological defect by Western observers. This linguistic metaphor suggests that what is said, thought, done or felt need not be a result of an ideally stable interior self 'expressing its needs', as it were, but rather the more or less appropriate response of an *ahamkara*-self to the environment of the moment. Like Dumont and Roland, Ramanujan recognizes a necessary concern with universals or entities which need not correspond to any particular contexts, but such invariant, 'context-free' ideas (*moksa*, *atman*, etc.) he takes to be of clearly secondary interest and emphasis for ordinary Indian thought. This often-noted distinction between two kinds of self (contextual vs. transcendent etc.) has been called 'split-level consciousness' by one of us (Desai 1980; Desai and Coelho 1981).

Ramanujan observes a key fact about the emergence of 'universals' in Indian thought. In each of the cases he cites (the explosive experience of linguistic meaning — *sphota*, the transcendent aesthetic experience — *rasa*, and spiritual release — *moksa*), 'the pattern is the same: a necessary sequence in time with strict rules of phase and context ending in a free state'. For each of his examples, interestingly, the traditions abound with controversy about the same central dilemma: does or does not (and if so *how* does) the context-sensitive flow preceding the moment of 'freedom' bring the latter about? (Biardeau 1965; Masson and

Patwardhan 1969). In the Vedanta school of thought, for example, Sankara concludes that the only 'context' which brings about enlightenment (realization of absolute *atman*-self) is the hearing of certain sentences from the Upanisads ('I am *brahman* [the absolute reality]', etc.) from the spiritual preceptor or guru by a disciple with a properly prepared, receptive mind (Lacombe 1939). Meditation, yoga, etc. cannot *create* the experience of enlightenment (*moksa*). All they can do is help to remove obstacles, peel away the sense of *ahamkara* which has been superimposed on the eternally free and unique *atman*.

Nevertheless, a 'context' is always there, even in Vedanta. Indeed, *in practice*, receiving truth from a Vedantic guru is an exceedingly contextual business. One eats with him, sits with him, is praised and insulted by him for one's subtly appropriate or inappropriate responses. At a certain moment one's mind is ripe and can receive the guru's message: then arises that profound mutual appropriation of guru and disciple about which the *Gita* says, 'I am in him and he is in me' (*Bhagavad Gita*, IX-29). The same thing occurs in Indian theories of meaning and aesthetics: moments of context-free self-feeling, aesthetic appreciation and linguistic meaning arise when there is a perfect matching and therefore the possibility of union or merging of inside and outside, subject and predicate, agent and context, guru and disciple. In the Ayurvedic Indian medical literature, as Zimmerman (1975) points out, 'appropriateness' (*satmya*), the key to health, is defined as 'that which is pleasing to the self'. We could paraphrase both the philosophical and medical positions thus: moments of appropriateness give rise to a sense of self.

Notions of the 'self' in psychoanalysis and related depth-psychological traditions have a long and still-expanding history. Freud's concept of 'ego', as has been noted by LaPlanche and Pontalis (1973), was never intended to designate a purely structural entity. The essential ambiguity of ego as both the representative of reality, source of defense, etc., and also a libidinal or narcissistic object (and hence really a *self* image), has been one of the greatest sources of creativity within psychoanalysis.

It is generally believed that Freud's interest in intrapsychic processes led him to put less emphasis on the environment and its appropriateness to the person than on conflicts within the psyche. There are, however, abundant indications of his ongoing,

always-implicit concern with the self-environment relationship. This concern is quite evident in the 'metapsychology' papers written around 1915. One telling example is the idea of the 'purified pleasure ego' (Freud 1915). This entity was thought to include the environment as a part of the (fantasied) self, in so far as it was pleasurable. In other words, the appropriate part of the environment was included within the sense of self, while the inappropriate part became the 'other', along with the pain it induced. An understanding of a part of the self as outside is clear in this formulation. Even more significant was Freud's (1917) dictum that 'the shadow of the object has fallen on the ego', which led to the idea that aspects of the ego are based on the relationship between self and object images. Perhaps Freud's most sustained meditation on the self's environment, and the infantile feeling of unity between self and world that sometimes lives on into adulthood 'side by side' with what the modern West thinks as a more normal sense of separateness from the world, is found in *Civilization and Its Discontents* (Freud 1930: 68).

Our preliminary overview of the Indian literature on selfhood suggests that inner experiences of selfhood were always correlated with a certain environmental 'appropriateness', although this was consciously denied by some Indian philosophic traditions. At this moment we simply note the parallel with psychoanalysis, and suggest that some of the same perplexities are present both in Indian thought and psychoanalytic object relations theories. Perhaps the most important of these is this: *Is the self located wholly within the person, or is it partly located (or felt to be located) outside among objects? Conversely, is the world entirely outside the self, or does it somehow reside within?* These are clearly questions to which psychoanalytic ideas concerning internalization are relevant, and these ideas will be considered later in the discussion.

The earliest self experience has been imaginatively reconstructed by Erikson (1981) and Kohut (1977) as prior to any clear sense of oneself as separate and different from the 'other'. They suggest that a sort of self awareness, or perhaps better a sense of selfhood, arises epigenetically in all babies lucky enough to have responsive mothering. The experience may be marked by the selective smiling response to the mother, an ecstatic moment when the mother's and infant's mutual delight in the other's existence lays the groundwork for the narcissistic developmental

line of self-regard. The heart of narcissistic development seems to be in this highly emotional 'numinous' experience of '*I*-ness'.

Erikson (1968, 1981) hypothesizes that this *I*-ness quickly becomes associated with sources of pleasure and effectiveness (sex organs, musculature, cognitive faculties), and shortly thereafter is constrained by social considerations of shame and guilt and becomes 'ritualized' in identification with a social self, acceptable to parents and society. As Carl Rogers (1961) similarly writes, one's self-feeling becomes constrained by 'conditions of worth' laid by others, and one may get locked into an unconsciously accepted role at variance with one's 'real self'. Optimally, the *I*-ness will become stably identified with a fairly broad sense of family and occupational identity and will be flexible enough to include other aspects of I-feeling when required by a changing environment or the developmental process.

Like Erikson, Kohut wrestled with the question of the relationship between the self as such and its specific abilities, self-images, goals, etc. In Kohut's terminology the question becomes: what is the relationship between the 'whole self' and the parts which seem to comprise it, or even between this whole self and the 'nuclear self' in which self-parts are organized through more or less well-developed narcissistic configurations?

Kohut's most developed thoughts on this subject are contained in a lengthy letter written in 1974 and revised subsequently as part of his collected writings (Ornstein 1978). These 'Remarks about the Formation of the Self' record Kohut's movement from the position that 'self nuclei' ('body-mind fragments') coalesce into a total self to the idea (which he never abandoned) that 'the developmental path of the experience is separate from that followed by [the] experience of the single body parts and single bodily and mental functions' (p. 748). 'The child's self experience arises separately, increasing in importance as it develops next to and, more and more, above his experience of body parts and single functions. . . . The parts, in other words, do not build up the self, they become built into it' (p. 749). The primary evidence for the view of separate developmental lines for the whole self and part selves is Kohut's observation that the environment (mother) responds to the child 'with two sets of responses: one is attuned to his experience of single parts of his body . . . and another is attuned to his beginning experience of himself as

a . . . coherent and enduring organizations, i.e., to him as a self' (p. 755). Kohut (1977) also speaks of this primal self as a 'self in *statu nascendi*', 'a virtual self', 'primed', as it were, to respond to the mother's treating it as a whole self by becoming one.

Note the ambiguity of the *I*-sense or self just described: considered by Erikson and Kohut to be a primary fact of existence, it is only later and secondarily identified with sources of pleasure, abilities, goals, rules of conscience, etc. And yet this *I* apparently always arises in a moment of intimate interaction with a 'context' (usually the mother and her emotional responsiveness to the young child). One can feel *atman* and *ahamkara* in this apparent contradiction.

Kohut's paradigmatic situation is the 'mirroring' relationship between the mother and infant, where the child's nascent self-hood is conveyed to it by the 'gleam in the mother's eye'. The mother's attention is a necessary context for the baby's self-experience. But clearly this situation is *also* one where the baby rests in the mother's arms, or in bed (an extension of her body), and just after or shortly before the intimate sharing with her of the nursing experience. Libidinal and narcissistic relatedness are empirically inseparable, and classical psychoanalysts have properly criticized Kohut for minimizing the emotionally charged libidinal aspects of the relationship out of which the self-experience arises.

But note again the parallel with the Indian situation described earlier. There, too, we hypothesized that the experience of self-hood, analogus to Kohut's *I*-ness, arises only in a context of warm emotional relatedness. If the ultimately private, interior sense of the *I*-ness occurs only in the context of affective relationships, we have a *natural* paradox, one not generated by culture-specific choices, but rather one which people of all cultures must face. Hence another purpose of this essay is to explore how Indians have dealt with the paradox, compare this with several Western depth-psychological solutions, and show how it might be overcome.

'I' Theory in the West

Let us examine some recent psychoanalytic theories a little further. Erik Erikson (1981), writing of the *I*-experience in Jesus' Galilean sayings, lists several essential ingredients of perceiving

oneself as an '*I*'. First, and most central, is *numinosity*. 'The *I*, after all, is the ground for the . . . assurance that each person is a center of awareness . . . , a center so numinous that it amounts to a sense of being alive, and more, of being the vital condition of existence' (p. 323). A second essential feature is the *I*'s '*luminosity*', its consciousness. It was this aspect of the self that William James (1890) called the 'I' or 'pure ego' in opposition to the 'me' or objective self. Third, Erikson finds necessary to the emergence of the *I*-sense an interplay with a maternal Other who is in some sense perceived as a primal *You*. From the beginning, according to Erikson, there is a sense of 'binary' relatedness inherent in the *I*; and the *I* and the *You* are different, though intimately joined. Erikson (1981: 330) makes it clear that the child contributes to the mother's *I*-sense, as well as gaining his *I*-sense from her: 'it seems of vital importance that this Other [the mother] and, indeed, related others, in turn experience the new being as a *presence* that heightens *their* sense of *I*'. To translate Erikson's idea into Kohutian terms, we may say that the child is a selfobject for the mother as much as she is for him, and their interaction has the mutuality of a field in which both participate. A fourth necessary ingredient of *I*-ness is a sense of 'centrality', related to which is a feeling of *inner autonomy*, amounting to a sense of being able *to act effectively*.

Much of Erikson's essay discusses how the *I*-ness could maintain itself in people who were subjected to an environment that negated in one way or another almost all of selfhood's essential conditions. According to Erikson, the solutions arrived at formed the basis of the Jewish and Christian religions; in both cases, though more strongly in Judaism, the *I* was preserved by being lodged in a God who is the transcendent centre of the life of the community and of the individual. Hence, Jehovah said to Moses, '*I am* that *I am*'. Religion compensates for a threatened *I* by transcending the need for a supportive context but also itself supports the *I*-sense of the believing community, thus becoming a *new* context. One of the most important ways that the Jewish God does this, Erikson suggests, is by strengthening the father-son or 'patrilineal' identification of the *I*-sense (by stressing the relationship of selfhood to the 'fathers': Moses, etc.) and ultimately connecting it with the idea of the *nation* Israel as a historical entity transcending actual geographic boundaries and,

to some extent, cultures. This illustrates a fifth essential quality of the *I*: its continuity. We shall find a similar phenomenon in India, where the *ahamkara*-self is sometimes defined through a continuous father-son lineality stretching back through the ancestors to the gods.

In Kohut's (1977) epigenetic theory, the 'spark in the mother's eye' as she looks at him awakens a virtually pre-existent self-experience in the young infant; similarly, Erikson speaks of 'the early feeding situation of the human infant, including that meeting of eye to eye which, it is increasingly clear, is an important source of the sense of *I* and of a primal *we*'. But for Kohut a second and equally important source of the *I* is an 'idealizing merger' with the parent (usually the father in the case of a boy). The child's still-shaky *I*-sense is included and participates in the much more glorious *I*-sense and personal effectiveness of the parent, thus strengthening itself. Both this idealizing sort of relationship and the mirroring relationship (typically with the mother) Kohut calls 'selfobject' relations. In normal development they become partially internalized as ambitions and ideals, out of which develops a relatively permanent 'cohesive self'; even so, no one ever becomes able wholly to do without a contextual contribution to his sense of *I*.

Explicit in Kohut's work is a model of the self that embeds it essentially (although less and less totally with psychological development) in its mirroring and idealized environment. It is the partial and optimal failure of this environment to meet the person's efforts to view it through the rosy spectacles of the two selfobject configurations that brings about internalization, the process whereby mirroring and idealizing become aspects of inner structure, partially independent of the environment. Kohut, however, does not consider the possibility of a culturally-defined environment that *does* live up to the person's selfobject-informed expectations, or of a self that is more capable of altering itself to find the world an appropriate context for its selfhood. Would internalization occur or even be as relevant in such a case? Is it possible for a culture to provide a responsive selfobject context which could endure in healthy individuals for a lifetime? Conversely, could persons in that culture learn to transform their selves in order to make the given environment more appropriate to them? We will suggest that India approaches such a culture, but

we are not claiming uniqueness for India. In fact, most non-modern cultures accomplish the same thing to some degree.

The Indian Self in the Vedic Period: A Case History

Self-feeling, so far as it can be discerned in the older Indian texts (*Rig Veda* primarily), was essentially an event closely connected with moments of creation, especially as manifested in the ecstasy of poetic inspiration, and in the gods' magnificent sense of effectiveness in the act of cosmogenesis: religious sacrifice and poetic thought participated in and assisted at the opening of the world. Simon and Weiner (1966) have noted a similar function of poetry in Homeric Greece. In Homer and the *Rig Veda*, poetic inspiration magnifies a person's sense of aliveness and agency by uniting him experientially with the cosmic environment. In neither case is any concept of self an explicit object of reflection; even so, we see here several of the essential qualities of selfhood identified by Erikson (1981): numinosity, mutuality of self and object, a search for continuity, and a powerful sense of effectiveness.

In the *Purusasukta* hymn, which occurs late in the *Rig Veda* (X.90), and subsequently, cosmic sacrificial celebrations (exchanges between poetic man and the cosmos) were interpreted as acts of a unique giant figure, a Cosmic Man (*Purusa*), whose body was found to contain the whole cosmos through identification of his articulated parts with those of the cosmic regions (his breath was the wind, his eye the sun, etc.). The Cosmic Man and his human counterpart the sacrificer (the man who paid for the rite) were symbolically reborn from a precosmic state of things, a sort of undifferentiated matrix called *brahman*. The complement of his birth was, however, the Cosmic Man's death through dissection or fragmentation, and various means were sought to ward this off or deny it. These led to subsequent efforts to internalize the sacrifice within the bodily, mental or spiritual self of the human person, so that nothing remained outside to threaten the cohesiveness of this self (Collins 1976, 1991).

Thus arose the Upanisadic doctrine of an homunculus-self called *atman*, not yet equivalent to the transcendent *atman* but on the way to it. This thumb-sized version of the Cosmic Man within the heart served to allay some of the fear of dissolution

that was widespread at this time, yet it was not completely successful. For example, the quest of the Buddha was motivated by his perception of both the futility of the communal sacrifice of the Cosmic Man and the fragility and transience of the sacrificer's body, and led to a total rejection of attachment to any kind of *ahamkara* or bodily self, even of the subtle kind represented by the humunculus self.

We may speculate that, as a result of this disquiet, some Upanisadic thought moved towards interpreting the Cosmic Man, and even the humunculus-self, as resting on a yet more subtle and interior self, the nonbodily, indestructible, and transcendent *atman*. In this way, the fear of death (understood as a narcissistic fear of bodily-mental self dissolution) which the earlier ritual-mythical thought had not removed was at least temporarily and for some people overcome.

We will attempt to explore this development in a little more detail, using the device of treating the Cosmic Man as a case history. We will call him *Prajapati*, literally the 'Father of Offspring' or 'Lord of Creatures', although he takes on many names and personalities. We will find that Prajapati is a model of the life cycle of the ancient Indian self.

Prajapati's birth is repeatedly described in physical terms in the texts. But typically he is not born of a mother or other singular person. Often he arises from the precosmic waters, an image also very common in the *Rig Veda*.

> In the beginning this world was nothing but a sea of water. The Waters desired to be born (propagate themselves). They worked at inward brooding (*tapas*), became heated and produced a golden egg. The egg floated for one year, and Prajapati was born from it (*Satapatha Brahmana* XI. 1.6.1–2).

Prajapati's birth usually results, as here, from a *desire* on his 'mothers' ' part to 'be born'. The verb for 'be-born' (*prajayemahi*) expresses the parents' desires for an act of 'birth' in which the distinction between parent and infant is not sharply drawn, a nondistinction which permits the parents' existence to continue in the child. The idea of *extending* a man's lineage is even more explicit in the expression *tanayebhih tanute*, 'He extends (*tan-*, 'to extend, hold out') himself through offspring'. The idea of a selfhood uniting a man and his son is omnipresent in the Vedic

literature, for example in the expression, 'you are the *atman* (self) called Son' addressed to the newborn male child by the father. When the father dies, he transfers his vital breaths (*prana*-s) into the son and gives him the sacred knowledge of transcendent *brahman*, which is itself often spoken of as a man's true self. The Waters desire to have offspring; but at the same time (part of the same idea) they desire to extend or prolong themselves, or cause themselves to ripen or mature, or become widely disseminated. Prajapati *is* the ripened or extended state of the Waters.

The connection of the father-son unity with the world of the gods (similar to what Erikson finds in Judaism) is clear:

> This world was water: This (water) was the root, that (world) was the shoot; this the father, those the sons. Whatever is the son's is the father's and whatever is the father's is the son's. Mahidasa Aitareya who knew this said, 'I know myself as reaching to the gods, and the gods as reaching to me' (*Aitareya Aranyaka* II.1.8).

'Birth' extends the self in (the form of) a person's offspring. It causes a preceding formless, fluid state to become more definite, in something like an act of self-ripening (expressed also by the idea of *tapas*, 'inward brooding').

A sad, but for the authors of the *Brahmanas* overwhelmingly significant, result of Prajapati's grandiose self-extension was his *falling apart* into the entities he emitted. Often these are cosmic elements (as above); equally often ritual elements or parts of the body are mentioned.

> Having produced creatures Prajapati fell apart, and the Breath (*prana*) went out of him. The five bodily parts into which he fell were: hair, skin, flesh, bone and marrow. He also fell apart into the five seasons and five regions of space (*Satapatha Brahmana* VI. 1.2.17–19).

Prajapati's disintegration into his world is a central theme of the earlier texts, and solutions to this distressing event are at the heart of those texts and also the later *Upanisads*. Various solutions are already present in the early texts, many taking use of the father-son unity to reintegrate the father by emphasizing the inherence of the father in the son, by the son's actions to save the father, as more darkly, by reabsorbing the son into the father's bodily self.

> When Prajapati had fallen apart and all the food flowed out of his eye, Agni ('Fire') ate all of it up. . . . Thus, in the Sacrifice, when the

> Sacrificer heats the offering, puts it on a golden plate and adds kindling sticks, he puts Breath, vigor and food back into himself and reintegrates himself (*Satapatha Brahmana* VII. 1.2.4–10).

The personified fire god, Agni, has here become an alter ego for Prajapati — he eats up the products of his father's self-extension, thereby reintegrating them into his (which is also to say his father's) self. Prajapati is reunited through being eaten: since father and son are one and identical, there is no difference between eating and being eaten.

The idea of the son reconstituting and reintegrating the old, decrepit father by eating him is similarly inverted in the Sraddhas, or memorial offerings for the dead 'fathers' (father, grandfather and great-grandfather), which have the aim of reconstructing the departed ancestors' bodies (Knipe 1977) by feeding them balls of food (*pinda*-s) that represent the son's bodies. The underlying oneness of father and son is clearly visible in the fertilizing effects of the *pinda* offerings for the *son*: the ceremony is repeatedly said to produce offspring for him. It appears that the son can save the father either by eating him or feeding (i.e., being eaten by) him. In either case, both father and son benefit. As the *Aitareya Aranyaka*, II.5 says, 'when the father supports the child before its birth and thereafter he really supports himself', since father and son are one self.

Sometimes Father Prajapati is saved from disintegration through his identity with the son who reintegrates him into his (the son's) body, or is himself reintegrated into the father's self or body. At other times, we are told that Prajapati preserves his cohesiveness by separating his own good and bad parts, and defeating or in other ways getting rid of the bad parts. The image is usually that of a struggle between the gods and demons (Asuras), both of which are sons of Prajapati. The bad side of the father is identified as the cause of Prajapati's disintegration, and by defeating or abandoning it he makes himself purely good and thereby immortal.

Perhaps even more important than the tactic of getting rid of evil, putting it out of sight and mind, is the pushing of Prajapati's disintegration to the limit, to the point of his 'having run his course' and being 'consumed and useless'; at this moment of maximal disintegration (a predominant symbol is ashes),

Prajapati's remains are returned to his Mothers, often the Waters, to be reborn and reconstructed. For example, Prajapati's evil parts are offered to Nirrti in the Royal Consecration and placed in an ant-hill, a container which often functions as a symbolic womb out of which life is reborn (Heesterman 1957). Prajapati's 'evil' is reborn as nourishment, a theme that recurs in the rubric, '*papman* becomes *sri*', 'evil becomes auspiciousness'.

Prajapati's career, like the seasonal nature that he brings about, is endlessly circular, moving from formlessness on emerging from the primeval, maternal waters, to the creatures of this world who decay into ashes, and then again into the Waters. Prajappti 'extends' himself in a circle back to his original state, and is then ready to create anew.

Heesterman (1964) notes that the ideal sacrificer, Prajapati's human representative, 'is born into a world he has made himself". This is one significance of the doctrine of *karma* (that actions always have results) for the actor's selfhood: through his self-sacrificial activity of making a world of creatures from his own substance the world is made *appropriate* to his cohesive selfhood, rather than destructive of it.

Prajapati's offspring constitute the environment in which he exists, his whole world. We may interpret the underlying sense to be that man produces his world by tearing himself apart. That is, the feeling of oneself as a whole is attacked by environmental experiences, which pull it apart, demanding responses from only one aspect of the self.

This implies, conversely, that the destructive, incohesiveness-tending nature of the environment can be redeemed through the coherence of the self from which that environment emanated. Thus Prajapati 'eats' his offspring, or is 'eaten' and given a newly cohesive birth by his mother. The strategy of identifying incohesiveness as a 'bad' part of Prajapati and disposing of that incohesiveness attempts to prevent disintegration from proceeding indefinitely.

Generational continuity affords a protection against disintegration; one's progeny are one's selfobjects, extending the 'self' beyond one's own mortal body. The part of the environment which most naturally lends itself to this projection in India is the son, although the implications of locating the father's self in the son were a source of some ambivalence for the Vedic

thinkers: the son's life, once separated from the father's life, seemed to weaken the father's.

The Self in the Upanisads

After the *Brahmanas*, when thought had been focused on redeeming Prajapati from his periodic disintegration, the *Upanisads* discovered another approach to the problem of achieving a cohesive self: identification of the *I* with the inner unmanifest, subtle, liquid *source* of Prajapati's self-organization. This can be understood as a development of the strategy discussed above, that of returning Prajapati to his mother's womb. *Atman* becomes the inner, originating life-sap (*rasa*) of things rather than the structures evolved out of that liquid. The central insight can be expressed thus: if one's self is the source of everything, decay and incoherence cease to be fearful, since 'one becomes the self of death'.

> In the beginning this world was only the self (*atman*) in the shape of a person (*purusa*). Looking around, he saw nothing other than himself. He said first, 'I am'; thus arose the name 'I'. . . . He became afraid because he was alone, but realized that he need not fear, since 'fear comes from a second'. He had no delight because he was alone, and made himself into the shape of a man and woman embracing. Thus, as the sage Yajnavalkya used to say, this body is only half of oneself, like half of a split pea. The wife fills the space of the other half (*Brhadaranyaka Upanisad* I.4.1–3).

The *I*-experience here is the source of everything else, because it is the source it can destroy ('burn up') anything in the environment which tries to oppose it. Even so, reality intrudes in the form of fear — apparently a fear akin to loneliness, or of being unresponded to. The *atman*'s decision to make itself into an embracing couple seems to be a solution to this problem, after an initial attempt at denial ('fear arises only from a second').

The aim is to become identified with (to 'know') a self beyond the various parts and aspects of the person (body parts, perceptual faculties, etc.). This self is sometimes understood as their principle of cohesiveness. Thus, he is the one who 'connects' and 'disconnects' (*uh* and *nir-uh-*) the parts of the person (*Brhadaranyaka Upanisad*, III.9.26). Often the *atman*-self appears as the 'Breath'

(*prana*) which connects the parts in a cohesive whole. Besides identifying the self with the source and principle of unity, the *Upanisads* often connect it with the essence of the world, or the aim of desire. Instead of seeking objects because one wants *them*, or needs to idealize or be mirrored by them, one seeks them because they are a part or aspect of the 'self', which is alone *truly* desirable. The 'self' side of the selfobject becomes dominant and totally assimilates the 'object' side.

> The sage Yajnavalkya said to his wife Maitreyi, 'Not for the sake of the husband is the husband dear (to the wife); he is dear for the sake of the self. . . . By knowing the self, one knows everything.'

In the end, then, a position of absolute monism is reached, where there is no other. No more is the husband 'dear' *because of* the self; he, like everything, 'has *become* the self' (*Brhadaranyaka Upanisad* II.4.14).

Discussion of the Prajapati/Atman Material

The Cosmic Man image in the Vedic Purusa and Prajapati represents an attempt to bring about a unity of man and world in fantasy. It is a grandiose fantasy which alternates with moments of disillusion and despair. The later Upanisadic *atman* doctrine seems even more grandiose, since selfhood, in this theory, is freed from all the vicissitudes of life in the human and cosmic worlds and offers a kind of conceptual solution to the eternal cycle of grandiosity and despair by transcending both phases of the cycle.

The motive underlying the Cosmic Man image was the need to preserve a sense of self cohesiveness and continuity in the face of the ever-present threat of fragmentation. These Kohutian ideas are expressed quite literally in the language of the *Brahmanas*, for which the whole point of the sacrifice was to bring about cohesiveness of the sacrificer, a state of fused unity which could withstand all environmental shocks, including death. When, inevitably, the sense of self shifted from secure (if defensive) cohesion to the generativity of fatherhood and incipient fragmentation, new tactics had to be devised to overcome the threat. The primary way this was accomplished (in the *Upanisads*) involved a regression in fantasy to the mother, or more exactly to the stage of empathic merger with her, so that the fragmented self ('ashes')

could be renewed and reborn whole. Gradually, the *parent* half of this primitive union became also identified with the self and was referred to as the 'immortal' part of Prajapati, or his 'unmanifested' part. This maternal *source of the self* was reinterpreted in a concept of the *self as source*; the historical antecedent of this move is the 'three-fourths' of the Cosmic Man which is identified with 'immortal life in heaven' in the *Purusasukta* of the *Rig Veda* (X.90). It is as if one part of the self gave birth to the other part. The self became the origin of everything in an absolute denial of dependency on anything, including *its own* source. Like Kipling's Kim when he finds himself alone, the *atman* is afraid because he has no second; although he talks himself out of it, it is clear that aloneness makes him afraid of falling apart, losing his sense of self.

The situation appears to be what Kohut called the 'vertical split', a defensive stance of denying need for a genuine other through unconscious merger with the parent image (see the diagram in Kohut 1977: 213). The person characterized by a vertical split is overtly grandiose, isolated and self-sufficient. He holds onto a mother image which confirms his person's sense of superiority provided that he does not try to become independent of it. In the Vedic material the Waters are like the mother who mirrors, while father Prajapati or the sacrificer resembles the continually emitting, narcissistic self. On the other side of the vertical split, according to Kohut, is a sense of being empty and ineffective, depressed and isolated, i.e., cut off from the affirming maternal mirror. The person presumes to a merger on one side of the split which he 'really' knows (on the other side) to be disastrously absent. Prajapati's state of chaotic disarray after creation, when he becomes disarticulated and 'emptied out', resembles the depressed, empty side of Kohut's split; in Prajapati's life it periodically alternates with the state of inflated greatness and completion.

When the *Upanisads* interiorized the source of good in the absolute *atman*, which put an end to alternation, there must have been a sense of tremendous psychic victory. It must have seemed as if nothing was needed from outside, and the danger of falling periodically away from the state of inner fullness was obviated once and for all. '*I*-ness' could be experienced free from the constant need for repair and renewal. As the Hindu

philosopher Sankara is supposed to have said a thousand years later, 'Behold I! Obeisance to Me who need nothing'.

Psychoanalytic Research in Contemporary Indian Culture

So far we have been primarily concerned with religious texts some 2500 to 3000 years old. That the issues uncovered there, viz. generational continuity, loneliness, falling apart, interiorization, are not merely of historical interest but are quite central to the contemporary Indian psyche can be seen by comparing Prajapati's self and its adaptive and defensive strategies with Carstairs' (1957), Roland's (1980, 1988) Kakar's (1980, 1981) and Ramanujam's (1980) descriptions of the vicissitudes of the selves of Indian patients seen in psychoanalysis and psychotherapy, and in Indian outside therapy.

Roland understands the Indian self to comprise the person *plus* his extended family and caste within a 'self-we' structure. What would be self-regard in the West becomes 'self-we' regard in the Indian context, the sense of self being spread over the family and caste. Especially central in the contemporary Indian psyche, as to Prajapati, is the continuity and identity from father (or father-figure) to the son. As Roland says,

> It is clear that the son profoundly needs the respect and confirming presence of the father and other father-figures, and in turn tries to enhance the self-regard of the father through his own good behavior and accomplishments (Roland 1981: 11).

B.K. Ramanujam (1980) has reported several cases where psychopathology was precipitated by the rupture of the father-son bond of mutual support and esteem enhancement. In one case, an unsatisfactory father was replaced in the psychic economy of a young man by a guru figure. The young man was seriously incapacitated by struggles with fantasies of himself destroying authority figures and the grandiosity inherent in that. He formed a transference to his therapist as a representative of the guru, whom he had in fact seen only once in his life at the age of eleven. The patient fantasied that the guru had spiritually adopted him at that time and that his symptoms were due to his failure to heed the guru's prescriptions. Specifically, he had told a lie and

had failed to remember the guru. But this fantasy contained the seeds of a cure, for the guru told him in a dream that the patient would eventually regain the guru's blessing. The therapist's arrival was interpreted as a partial fulfiliment of the promise, and through an idealizing transference towards the therapist (who accepted and did not interpret his fantasies towards the guru and about himself) the patient recovered.

Kakar has characterized the father-son merger as an 'oedipal alliance' and refers (1981) to Fenichel's term 'apprentice complex'.

> 'Oedipal alliance' refers to the deeply buried and unfulfilled need of many male patients for the firm support, guidance and emotional availability of the father who was needed by the little boy at the oedipal stage of his life so that the boy could separate and free himself from an overwhelming, omnipresent and especially sexually threatening mother (1945: 89).

As this quotation makes clear, Kakar understands the father-son bond as a fantasy, something not fulfilled in ordinary father-son relationships in India, and in part as defensive against phase-inappropriate attachment to the mother. This oral fixation, according to Kakar, is due to the mother's narcissistic preoccupations and untrustworthiness. Apparently the shift to the father does *not* occur for the classical oedipal reasons: fear of castration by the father and identification with the aggressor. Indeed, apart from having a similar outcome (close connection with the father and fatherly men), it is difficult to see why Kakar refers to the alliance as 'oedipal'. Although he does not consider the possibility, it would seem that the relationship he describes is essentially narcissistic in the Kohutian sense, a merging or idealizing relationship with the father substituting for the inadequate mirroring relationship with the mother (Kohut 1971).

The case reported by Kakar of a 40-year-old male university lecturer is consistent with this interpretation. The man suffered from fantasies of self-castration and bizarre identity disturbances following the sexual advances of a divorced woman colleague. After a period of analysis he had the following dream:

> (My mother) is naked and has a gloating expression on her face. I am very scared. Then I see you (the analyst) sitting in one corner of the room with an enormous erect penis next to your chair that rises

> from the floor and reaches the ceiling. I hold the penis and feel safe (Kakar 1980: 52).

Although Kakar does not mention it in his 1980 article, the dream transparently refers to a series of mythical stories in which a worshiper seeks refuge in the *linga*, or stylized erect penis, of the god Siva. In a later book (1981) Kakar discusses this theme of invulnerability through merger with the (paternal) phallus, and concludes that it is essentially narcissistic, in the classical Freudian (1914) sense.

> Psychologically the *linga* does not have an erotic connotation, if by eroticism one means the direction of sexuality towards the world of objects, the desire for others. In other words, the *linga* is not a symbol of sexual libido but of narcissistic libido, of sexual investment in the self (Kakar 1981: 160).

Here Kakar comes near to the idea of the shared father-son self, which we found in Roland's work and in the Prajapati myth. However, Kakar never discusses the self as a normal developmental task, treating it only as a 'grandiose self'; hence an adaptive 'we-self' (in invert Roland's term) falls outside his area of interest.

Looking at the Indian self-experience ontogenetically, Roland traces the narcissistic line of development in India from its beginnings in an intensely warm and self-enhancing relationship with the mother. Frustration of the need for empathic mirroring and support is minimized during this period; hence 'optimal' frustration does not occur and 'transmuting internalization' (Kohut 1971) is impossible. Later, however, Indian children undergo an intense trauma with the birth of a sibling or at weaning, often around age five. The mother's formerly close, empathic involvement is replaced by demands to behave exactly according to the multiple expectations of senior family members. In Carl Rogers' (1961) terms, there is an abrupt shift from 'unconditional positive regard' to very severe 'conditions of worth'; unless the child lives up to these conditions, he is threatened with being cut off from empathic nurturance and mirroring. From this time on, the Indian person receives his self-regard by conforming to demands of fitting behavior which he takes contextually from the many others who compromise his domestic context. Roland argues that this does not imply that Indians are externally controlled and without internalized ego-ideals and consciences. Rather, images

of good behavior, etc., *are* internalized in a person's concern with how well he is modeling himself after an admired other or meeting the expectations of parental or sibling figures. Although fixed rules and aims are not internalized as in the West, there is an internal directive to be attuned to the expectations of important others even when one does not know ahead of time what these will be. This is an important suggestion, and Roland seems to have pointed out a key issue in focusing on internalization. In A.K. Ramanujan's linguistic terms (1990) we could say that the person internalizes context-sensitivity.

Internalization in the Indian Personality

Looking at Roland's model from a Kohutian perspective, Indians might seem to be simply treating other people as selfobjects; to be sure, they have developed a certain virtuosity in responding appropriately and so securing the satisfaction which having selfobjects brings, but what evidence is there that context-sensitivity forms or develops into a stable, quasipermanent nuclear self? Does the Indian personality possess the goals, ambitions, and ideals of considerable permanence which Kohut considers the best evidence of genuine internalization? How can one really speak of internalization in the area of self-esteem without evidence that the person can modulate his or her own sense of self-esteem without constantly turning to selfobjects? The question of the *meaning* of internalization in the Indian context must be addressed.

A way in which an ideal Indian personality may possess internal goals and how it reconciles these with context-sensitivity is suggested by van Buitenen's discussion of the Indian literary hero (1959). As van Buitenen points out, the ideals of everyday life are closely related to the religious routes to transcendent selfhood described above. Prajapati and the worldly hero both attempt to maintain a dynamically-cohesive state of being that can transcend the fluid world crises. Thus, the Indian hero is almost invariably called *dhira* ('firm'), 'describing the poise and equilibrium which is the condition of constancy and reliability, frequently likened to the repose of the ocean deeps which, in spite of minor disturbances at the surface, remain largely unperturbed'. The hero is constant at a deep level of himself, while adaptable and vigilant outwardly; van Buitenen refers to a 'constant cagey awareness of

what is going on . . . wide awake vigilance and capacity for immediately acting upon what comes within its purview'. The hero is able to take advantage of circumstances to achieve his aims and ambitions; in other words, he can bring about 'appropriateness' between his goals and circumstances, like the Ayurvedic physician who alters the relations between a person and his environment to render them appropriate to him (Zimmermann 1975). As we saw earlier, one way in which Prajapati rescues himself from his repeated falling apart is by creating an appropriate world from his own substances, and by excluding the 'bad', corruptible parts of his nature and so reducing the decay-inducing qualities of the environment. Throughout his cyclic activity Prajapati, like the human hero, is totally, onepointedly aimed at his goal of cohesiveness. Outwardly, Prajapati and the hero deal with each situation appropriately, turning its nature to advantage if possible and adapting his nature to its requirements if necessary.

Another approach to internalization in the Indian personality is suggested by Roland (1980). He distinguishes two levels of hierarchical relationships in Hindu India, each corresponding to a level of self-feeling (self-esteem, cohesiveness, etc.). The lower level involves response to the expectations of others, especially those of higher status, where one participates in a father-son (or family-person) 'we-self'. That is, one's sense of self is partially merged with the father or family. Beyond this familial self Roland locates a more 'particular' self, intimately involved in self-transformation and religious activities. This is often an explicitly 'transcendent' or *atman*-like self and may be supported by a person's membership in a religious sect — not necessarily one related to his family's practices. In this transcendent self a person is more individual (at least in relation to his family) and less merged with others. The point of interest in the present context is that the we-self feeling is not always syntonic with the transcendent self. Indians, in fact, seem to suffer a rather high level of feelings of deceitfulness and unreality in respect to the we-self environment (Roland 1980; Desai 1980).

One of us (Desai) has noted from his own experience, and from working psychotherapeutically with Indians, that cynicism and mistrust of others are very prevalent. Apparently the reality of environmental inappropriateness, which often penetrates the cultural attempt to match the environment to the person's needs,

forces a further move on the Indian psyche. When one level of environment fails (because it is too abrasive or unnurturant, etc.), the sense of self is either projected or withdrawn to another, more transcendent or interior level. For example, the extended family we-self may be replaced by the we-self of a guru and fellow disciples, or by interior sorts of 'environments' created by meditation. The ultimate fantasy, of course, is of a self including and thus beyond the vicissitudes of environment. Resort to such an *atman* may well be correlated with disillusionment with a cultural or familial environment grown inappropriate to a person's sense of self. The process is apparently identical to the one we noted in the *Upanisads* after the grandiose Cosmic Man fantasy failed. A very common example of disillusion-motivated withdrawal into the interior self is the case where an offended family member (usually a woman) refuses to eat or otherwise interact with others of her family and sits mutely until they correct the inappropriateness.

The interchange between Prajapati and his environment, as between the contemporary Indian person and the surrounding social world, always puts the self in question, either supporting or attacking it. Many tactics, we have noted in Indian culture, aim at rendering the world more appropriate to the self. The illusion (or defensiveness) in many of these seems evident to a Western sensibility (Hanly and Masson 1976), but such interpretations may be excessively negative, especially since an inappropriate world *does* injure the sense of self or self-esteem. A more positive view of altering the world in fantasy to suit oneself is found in D.W. Winnicott's (1971) ideas of 'play' and 'transitional objects'. In brief, he considers the child's treatment of objects such as teddy bears as alive and responsive to his needs to be a ***healthy illusion***, an early stage in the ability to create a 'transitional' realm of culture where the world is more appropriate to the self than it would otherwise be. Art and religion are the highest forms found in this transitional area, and it is here that the sense of self is most secure because here the self most appropriates its world.

It is important to note that culture is *not* simply an externalized fantasy; it is part of the actual environment, and often the most important part. We observed above that Indians distinguish an inner area of felt 'trust' from an outward region of dissembling and falseness (sometimes concretely distinguished as the religious

sect or *atman* vs. the rest of the world). This phenomenon of split-level consciousness demonstrates the contrast between an appropriate interpersonal environment, where one can be oneself, and one verging on inappropriateness, where one must dissemble. In both examples, part of the erstwhile appropriate cultural world becomes perceived as inappropriate, and the boundaries of appropriateness are drawn more reflexively. This process is elaborately developed in the Indian yogic speculations on the *kosas* ('sheaths') — more and more interior layers of world and personality culminating in the fantasy of the ultimately interior blissful self. In this light a kind of literal 'internalization' appears as a defense based on disillusionment with the appropriateness of the world, an idea quite consonant with Freud's (1917) 'Mourning and Melancholia' model of internalization.

Internalization in the Indian Personality: An Integrative Attempt

We have discussed self-environment relationships in Indian personality through psychoanalytic (especially Kohut's and Winnicott's) and anthropological (Marriott's 'interpersonal fluidity') models. Ideally, social life is a matrix of mutually appropriate selfobject transactions within which persons are suspended in a dynamic balance, each part affecting the other. When the environment fails to behave appropriately, i.e., refuses to be used as a transitional space or selfobject, it may be persuaded, coerced or tricked into so behaving; or it may be denied in a turn towards the context-free *atman*. Operative in both strategies is the phenomenon of split-level consciousness, which also occurs in everyday life whenever one part of the world is denied and another, inner part is treated as transitional.

From another perspective the *atman* strategy can be viewed as changing the self to assure the world's appropriateness to it. Through a variety of ascetic and religious practices such as yoga the self is thought to be transformed into something capable of 'seeing itself' in literally *any* external object or circumstance. To express the paradox again: when nothing is *needed* as a selfobject, everything *becomes* a selfobject.

The Indian model of the world often allows the 'self' to try to alter the 'environment' to suit its requirements, or conversely to

alter itself to make the world a better selfobject. Any culture must make some such allowances (this being the cultural dimension of the transitional phenomenon) but it seems far more characteristic of the Indian world-view than of modern Western psychology, where a positivist attitude that sharply splits the 'self' from its 'objects' places checks on the process. When the world of Prajapati's offspring becomes destructive of Prajapati's sense of self-cohesiveness, for example, he changes it, and *ipso facto* himself, by eating them. Also, since the Cosmic Man's self is understood to be the world's origin, that self can always find some way to correspond to the world, however inappropriate the latter becomes. Others seek self-alteration or transformation through practices like fasting, yoga, meditation, and other purification rituals. At the extreme is the Upanisadic 'realization' that 'I am the self of Death': even the ultimate inappropriateness implicit in the self's annihilation is made to mirror the self's greatness.

In addressing explicitly the issue of internalization as it relates to these ideas, we will make use of Meissner's (1980, 1981) work, since it constitutes one of the clearest and most detailed discussions in the recent literature. Meissner provides careful definitions of three species of internalization: *incorporation*, *introjection*, and *identification*, and sharply distinguishes them from one another. In these terms, we will find that the Indian material provides numerous instances of incorporation and introjection but relatively little of identification. Hence, the question of internalization in India becomes more specific: not *whether* it occurs, but *what sort*.

Incorporation is a process whereby the contents of a needed or desired object-representation are completely assimilated to the self, with no objectivity left over; it is a selfobject merger, which aims to maintain the self-enhancing qualities of the object by totally metabolizing it (Meissner 1981: 18). In the Indian material, it may correspond to Prajapati eating up his world after it had become disappointing to him.

Introjection is understood to involve a lesser 'shift of object-representational elements away from the object-reference to a self-reference' (Meissner 1980: 246); but the object-elements which are thus transferred within are *already* transitional in nature, and in introjection they retain a transitional *object* status. They are, as it were, treated as 'mine' rather than as 'me'. Because

introjects are still partially objective, they readily lend themselves to *projection*, which for Meissner is a complement to introjection: projection creates secondary transitional objects in the environment by infusing the outer world with introject qualities. Introjects are parts of the psychic apparatus which function to an extent as transitional objects, and as such may be compared to some of the inner structures of the personality in Indian theories. For example, the various more or less subtle layers of the mind identified in the yoga and Vedanta (sometimes called *kosas*, or 'sheaths') are clearly distinguished from the real self, the *atman* (Dasgupta 1965). Vedanta does not allow any layer of the *ahamkara*-based personality to be homogeneous with or appropriate to the *atman*, but the subtler layers, those 'nearer' the *atman*, are less inappropriate to it, i.e., they obscure its self-awareness less. Furthermore, these subtle objects lead towards the discrimination between the self and *all* objects which produces 'enlightenment'. Thus these subtle objective parts of the personality are true selfobjects: they mirror the self to itself.

The third process, *identification*, is an entirely distinct metapsychological process (Meissner 1980: 245) and involves adaptation to the actual qualities of the object and the establishment of autonomous structures within the ego which contrast with the transitional structures created by introjection. The needs of the self are set aside in an effort to accommodate to the requirements of reality.

Although Meissner does not discuss them, it seems apparent that cultural factors must play a role in determining the balance between introjection and identification. A solid, positivistic worldview which values and believes in the objective, independent reality of the world is likely to produce persons with higher proportion of identification; more liquid, relativistic world views such as India's should produce more incorporation and introjection. In India, however, the introjective-projective process *does* seem to change both selves and environments (in the direction of greater mutual appropriateness), and it would not be true, from the Indian point of view, that 'externalization through projection can only modify representational components and has no effect on the external object' (Meissner 1980: 246).

It is clear that in any culture the transitional object realm, in so far as it consists of persons, is modified through being viewed

as transitional by a significant other. Erikson and Kohut point out how the mother's attitudes and behavior towards the child are affected by the child's treating her as a selfobject. Her sense of *I* is enhanced by affirming his, and by his affirmation of her response. There is a mutuality between self and selfobject, which in India is understood to affect all social relationships, not only that of mother and child. We have discussed how both the father's and son's sense of self are dependent on one another and on the generational continuity in which they share. Such mutual effects must be universal but in India they are strong and explicit: the self does modify its environment, and changes to modulate the environment's impact on itself under the influence of the basic need for appropriateness.

The Indian vision of personality is one that finds the self embedded essentially in a world of selfobjects, towards which it turns constantly and eagerly, but which it introjects or incorporates when necessary to preserve a threatened sense of self-world mutuality. At times in Indian thought much of what modern Western psychology thinks of as the 'inner' personality structure is conceived as outside the self, while at other times more or less of the 'outer' world is understood as within the self. 'Inside' and 'outside' are defined in terms of appropriateness, not physical ('real') location. That which is more alike, homogeneous or fitting is treated as nearer, while that which is less homogeneous and less fitting and more unlike is seen as farther out. Meissner's understanding of introjects as 'inner' structures which are felt as partially outside is parallel to the Indian view, as is his treatment of projections that are in a way felt to be within. When this process of self-world adjustment fails, the move towards an objectless inner *atman* may occur at a philosophical level and various forms of split-level consciousness at an experiential level.

Western and in particular classical psychoanalytic ideals of stable, permanent individuality based on identifications with and respect for the unalterability of the environment are foreign to the Indian perspective. The Indian personality and world are more fluid, blending together at times, while at other times (or even at the same time) an interior core of the self is held aloof with practiced detachment. We are tempted to say that the two cultures provide contexts in which particular myths of the self

are pursued. Western psychology has idealized a myth of autonomy, whereas Indian thought idealizes the myth of merger. While the *atman* ideal seems to contradict this, offering an image of absolute isolation and renunciation of the world, we have seen that the *atman*, too, can only be understood in the context of the *ahamkara*-self and its various sorts of appropriateness and cohesiveness; in particular in its failures to maintain these.

There is a recurring theme in Indian thought which may suggest more clearly *atman*'s inseparability from *ahamkara*. This is the idea of the *sahaja* state or personality, meaning literally the 'innate', or more generally a 'natural' state of being or awareness of selfhood. From the perspective of the *sahaja* state there is no separation between *ahamkara* and world, or between *atman* and *ahamkara*. Everything is appropriate, hence there is no need for split-level consciousness or *atman* hanging aloof from everyday life. When the *atman* fantasy appears in Indian thought it can best be understood as a tool for returning the person to a state of selfobject appropriateness, and only its failure to do this as pathological.

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Part Six

Case Studies of Individuals

16

Shakuntala

Alan Roland

Shakuntala, a woman in her late twenties, comes from an upper middle-class, upper-caste family from north India. She is an attractive, socially sophisticated, intelligent, and artistic woman, who is currently a college lecturer in the humanities in Bombay. Students gravitate to her for informal counselling. When she began to have difficulties in counselling a couple of them because of her own personal problems, a psychologically sophisticated administrator suggested she see a psychoanalyst — which she did for over a year, and then stopped. The administrator, upon learning that I was in Bombay, suggested that Shakuntala see me.

In the initial session, Shakuntala hinted at highly ambivalent feelings concerning her former therapist. 'I would have to lie down and he would sit silently most of the time. . . . At times I didn't come.' She didn't like 'must' situations; they reminded her too much of her relationship with her mother, who was always ill. I told her that coming to therapy was strictly up to her, which eased the situation appreciably. Shakuntala's attitudes showed that although there is deference in Indian hierarchical relationships, the person has definite feelings of what she may or may not want to do, and when the relationship is not a satisfactory one, she will cut it off in one way or another.

But what struck me much more was that she had been in psychoanalytic therapy twice a week for well over a year, and had been able to keep two of the most important areas of her life completely secret from the therapist. I have not yet encountered anything close to this with American patients. She felt the

therapist would not be receptive to these two major concerns of hers, and so simply never brought them up. What impressed me was the radar sensitivity of Indians to how receptive the other would be to various aspects of one's inner life and their ability to keep some secret within the private self.

At the initial session, I asked her how she felt about seeing an American therapist. She replied that it would actually be easier in ways than seeing an Indian one, as Indian men have double standards. She intimated that I, as the liberal American, probably would not. She was not yet married — extremely unusual for an Indian woman in her late twenties — but felt intense pressure from her parents, particularly her mother, to have an arranged marriage. 'I don't know if I can die in peace without your being married, I worry so', evoked considerable guilt in Shakuntala. She then revealed that she was tremendously attached to a close friend's husband, Kumar, a man some fifteen years older, and intimated that there might be a sexual relationship going on; but she was highly reluctant to talk about this.

This central conflict of her life, whether to give in to familial pressures, and particularly her mother's, to have an arranged marriage, or whether to continue a long-term affair with Kumar, came to occupy the centre stage of our work together but had not been revealed at all to her former therapist because of her strong expectations of being criticized and judged by him. Although this seemed to be a realistic evaluation of the attitudes of an Indian urban man, I came to know of certain exceptions among the Bombay analysts. It eventually emerged that her fear of being judged by Indian men was also an unconscious projection of her own quite traditional, deeply internalized conscience, which condemned the affair. Coming to see me as the liberal American, the resistance to communication was far less intense.

By the end of the first session we agreed that she would come two or three times a week — three times if her teaching schedule permitted — for the four months I would be in Bombay. She spoke increasingly freely as confidentiality was firmly established and the issue of double standards discussed. She seemed more than glad to pour forth her intense feelings around Kumar and his wife, Veena, as well as her conflicts over having her parents arrange a marriage. This is an important commentary on self-presentation and the inner private self in Indian hierarchical

relationships, where women may be extremely circumspect in what they say in any number of social situations. But given a nonjudgmental, confidential, and receptive relationship, Shakuntala revealed a great range of feelings and fantasies from her private self. I have generally found that if it is possible to get beyond the outer barrier of social reserve, Indian patients tend to be in touch with a wider range of feelings and fantasies than most Americans. In effect, if the psychoanalytic relationship can be transformed from a structural hierarchical one in which the analyst is deferred to, to that of hierarchy by quality in which the analyst is related to as one of the more trusted, empathic members of the extended family or a respected mentor, then associations and emotions are freely expressed.

The socio-historical context of Shakuntala's situation was highly pertinent to her inner struggles. Shakuntala's family — like other highly educated, middle-or upper middle-class urban elite families — have modified the arranged marriage, first to allow their daughter to receive college and then postgraduate education, and then to have a veto over their choice. Her conflict would never have emerged in the form it did if it were not for the modernization that her family had undergone. In a more traditional family, or her own but a few decades before, Shakuntala would simply have had her marriage arranged — in past eras at an early age — and would not have been able to wriggle out of two or three arrangements at the last minute, as had already occurred. The affair itself could be managed far more easily in the modern, cosmopolitan atmosphere of Bombay — where a single woman can live on her own, as Shakuntala did, in a room in someone's flat with a certain degree of anonymity and privacy of relationships — than perhaps in any other Indian city.[1]

At the beginning of our work together, a particular drama was ensuing between Shakuntala, Kumar, and Veena. Shakuntala revealed that she has been a close friend of Veena's and Kumar's for the last ten years. They were all from the same community and easily socialized together. Veena doesn't really know that she and Kumar are having an affair, although Shakuntala senses that Veena is very uneasy about Shakuntala's relationship with Kumar. Shakuntala feels Veena is acting in a very subtle way to edge her out. In front of Kumar, Veena enthusiastically invites Shakuntala over, but she then conveys to Kumar privately that Shakuntala

doesn't really want to visit, thus slowly manipulating matters to cut off the relationship. In the past, Veena had subtly alienated Kumar from his favourite niece because the latter tended to be too exclusively involved with Kumar. Shakuntala, on the other hand, goes out of her way to be a close friend of Veena's. In fact, Shakuntala sees all of them as her second family, is very attached to Veena and the children, as well as to Kumar, and so is both disturbed and angry over what she senses Veena is doing, though she realizes that Veena sees her as a rival.

This pattern of having an affair with a married man by remaining close friends with his wife and children is completely alien to anything I have seen in American life with my patients, or socially.[2] I was not quite sure what to make of it. Later conversations with Niti Seth, a psychologist, revealed that a few of her single women friends in Bombay, who were involved with a married man, inevitably had close relationships with his wife and children. Our discussion pointed to the profound need of the Indian woman for a strong emotional enmeshment and connectedness within family relationships, which is then carried over into the affair with a married man and his family. Also, characteristically Indian was Veena's subtle manoeuvring to edge Shakuntala out. These subtleties are usually sensed rather than openly discussed, Indians being constantly attuned to underlying feelings and motives that are rarely communicated overtly.

By the sixth session, Shakuntala told of mending fences with Veena, by confronting her about not inviting Shakuntala over when the two of them could be together. Then her associations suddenly went off in another direction. Shakuntala began speaking about her favourite aunt, who had wanted Shakuntala to marry her son, Shakuntala's first cousin. Shakuntala and the boy both wanted to marry, but Shakuntala's father evoked the norms of their north Indian community, which forbade first cousins to marry. When this aunt became widowed in her thirties, she turned to the religious life and became a holy woman — a recognized and respected guru with an appreciable following and an ashram at Simla. Shakuntala revealed that her aunt initiated her and told her that she had very great spiritual potential and could stay in the ashram — or she could also get married. Recently, her aunt had written to Shakuntala, criticizing her for neither marrying nor coming to the ashram to advance herself spiritually. What

emerged dramatically was that her inner conflict was not simply between continuing her affair with Kumar and having an arranged marriage, but equally between the affair and renouncing the world to go to her aunt's ashram — something her mother would also oppose.

Shakuntala had told none of this second conflict, nor any of her intense spiritual aspirations, practices, and experiences to her first therapist. She sensed that he would simply not be in tune with the spiritual side of her, and so she kept this major dimension of her inner world to herself. This was a further reason for not seeking out other Bombay psychoanalysts after leaving her first therapist. This fear actually had some grounding in reality, as many of the psychoanalysts I met in Bombay have made their main ideological investment in highly individualized, at times Western values, and are often extremely ambivalent if not negative toward Hindu religion and spiritual practices.[3] I encountered Shakuntala's attitude again and again, when people told me of their hesitation to communicate anything of a traditional spiritual nature to anyone unreceptive to it, and particularly to someone, whether Indian or Western, with Western-oriented, rational, positivistic values.

I should further note that Shakuntala's colleagues at the college, even ones who were reasonably close to her, seemed to have had no idea whatsoever of her intense involvement in spiritual pursuits. From conversations with them, at a time when I was asked to lecture in a couple of their classes, I gathered that they saw her primarily as a lively, highly social, sophisticated woman — something of a social butterfly. Thus it is apparent in Shakuntala and other Indians I encountered that efforts to realize the spiritual self are often kept very private — in some contrast to Americans I know, who are inclined in this direction.

In the ensuing several sessions, Shakuntala offered some commentary on the nature of marriage for an urban-educated, Hindu woman, as she struggled with her involvement with Kumar, in contrast to an arranged marriage. She said that the lot of an unmarried woman, even in the modernized sector of urban Indian society, is highly insecure, unless she is strongly career-oriented — which Shakuntala is not. Since an Indian woman's security is tied first to her father, and then to her husband and son(s), as Shakuntala would get older and her parents pass away,

her insecurity would only become worse. She faced the further reality that Kumar would never leave his wife and children, as he felt responsible for them and devoted to the latter, and needed to preserve his highly successful position in society, which would be jeopardized if he left his wife. Even more painful was the realization that Shakuntala could never have a child by him, as this is totally unacceptable in even the most Westernized sectors of Indian urban society — in contrast to contemporary American urban society, where occasionally single women from the upper-middle classes plan to have children.

Nevertheless, her passionate involvement with Kumar and her feeling 'very special' offset all of these reality considerations. In an arranged marriage, she felt, there usually is much less sexual passion, at least for some years, and she would have to adjust completely to her husband; although she asserted that in the very process of giving over an Indian wife slowly gains control. As Shakuntala confronted her dilemma in our sessions, she became deeply involved in prayer and meditation one day, and felt appreciably better.

Her associations turned to her parents, particularly her mother, who were to come to Bombay for an extended stay with Shakuntala's brother and sister-in-law. When she fervently expressed the wish to stay with her parents apart from her brother and sister-in-law, I interpreted that she would like to go back to old times. She responded by crying for some time, telling of how greatly indulged and specially treated she had been as a child, and how hard it was living on her own — she just barely made ends meet in Bombay. She felt depressed at being separated from her parents and would have liked just to lie beside her mother again.

I have never heard an American woman patient express such a wish. The difference in normal dependency and interdependency relationships became clearer in the following session, when Shakuntala elaborated that in an Indian family, dependence on one's parents — especially the mother — is simply enormous for a girl as well as a boy; that if a parent dies, it's as if part of you disappears. Conversely, she sensed that she meant so much to her mother that she was profoundly letting her down by not marrying, and therefore felt terribly guilty. The problem in Shakuntala's case was that the relationship with her mother did not work well.

In spite of being intensely involved in the Durga Puja, a major religious holiday, she came to the following session complaining a great deal about back pains, feeling she was being repaid for being mean to her mother by not agreeing to an arranged marriage. Her mother let her know that she would not have peace even after she died if Shakuntala did not marry — thereby using traditional beliefs about reincarnation to evoke guilt in Shakuntala. Shakuntala now wavered over proceeding with the arranged marriage for her mother's sake, gaining only security for herself. Nevertheless, she had begun to differentiate herself from her mother by seeing a back specialist, something her mother had never done. Shakuntala had always felt the pressure to relieve her mother's suffering, but felt she actually never could. She closed the session by saying that I was the only one she could really open up to, indirectly conveying the sense that her intense dependency needs were being partially fulfilled through the therapeutic relationship.

On the surface, it appears that Shakuntala's love affair with Kumar was simply an expression of Westernizing/modernizing influences in highly cosmopolitan Bombay, where this couple had worked out a covert love relationship not uncommon in many Western countries — with an Indian familial variation. The affair was also clearly facilitated by her considerable individualized development, which included sophisticated social skills, living on her own, education encompassing an advanced degree, and a career. Nevertheless, new material brought out other dimensions to this relationship that were much more in accord with Hindu culture and disclosed a far more traditional psychological makeup.

For many years Kumar had voiced a strong desire to go on a pilgrimage to the temple of a highly revered, deceased holy man, of whom he was a fervent devotee. He now invited Shakuntala to undertake this pilgrimage with him and his family. More important for Shakuntala were the after-effects of the pilgrimage. Although she had never been a devotee of this holy man, Shakuntala experienced visions of him and his presence for at least two months after they returned to Bombay. Shakuntala was absolutely convinced that she and Kumar had been connected to each other in past lives through their relationship with this holy man, that she was simply living through her past attachments (*samskaras*) to Kumar, and that when these were eventually satisfied, the

relationship would end (not necessarily in this life). That this intense attraction was based on past lives is a traditional theme of Indian folklore, in which a couple, whether married or not, are irresistably drawn to one another from their love in past lives. In this particular variation, the connection was experienced by Shakuntala as being through a particular holy man. Thus, the intense inner meanings given to this love relationship and how she experienced it were fully in accord with certain themes of Hindu culture, however much it was aided and abetted by modernizing influences and greater individualization.

After this pilgrimage, Shakuntala became more inwardly convinced of the validity of their love relationship, and more willing to dispense with the securities of an arranged marriage, in exchange for the specialness Kumar afforded her. Although I had previously tried to delve into the resistances against discussing her sexual relationship, it wasn't until this point that Shakuntala revealed the intense emotional and sexual passion. Certain superego pressures were apparently relieved by her inner experiences.

She then began discussing with me sexuality, as related to spiritual powers. She mentioned that only the most spiritually advanced persons have transcended their sexuality. Even those who have renounced the world often have strong sexual urges, recounting one or two stories she had heard from her aunt about some notable swamis. She talked more about the *Kundalini*, how it is related to sexuality and to various spiritual powers when it is cultivated and aroused. At one point, she associated quite informally about reincarnation, mentioning that her aunt knew who she was in her previous three births.

Shakuntala then brought in her first two dreams. 'In the first dream, my aunt dies. In the dream she is very small like a child, she is on a raised platform. There are certain decorations around this platform that remind me of a *puja*.' Shakuntala's association to this dream was that it might well be prophetic, as her aunt was apparently ailing. This reflected what I found to be the response of many Indians to their dreams: a constant surveillance for the clairvoyant, telepathic, or the prophetic — part of the profound Indian concern with destiny. The second dream was much more complex. 'The first part is vague, seemingly with Kumar and possibly Veena, who seems to have turned into my mother at some point. Then, their four children are going into

a cart, the cart swaying from side to side like a see-saw, the children going in and out of some square structures. Kumar's oldest daughter (the second oldest child) falls out of the cart and is run over by a truck. I see it and cry out, then I come running over crying out "Uma, Uma" (the name of her deity) and I pick up the bloody child. Kumar suddenly turns into her uncle, and her mother (originally Veena in the dream) has to go to the toilet. Someone offers her some cool melon juice. Others there seem rather unconcerned about the child, who is taken to the hospital, where an aunt (the uncle's wife) pulls on the tongue of the child and says she will live. The girl is all right.'

In her associations, the uncle is someone who likes Shakuntala a great deal and feels she is very spiritually advanced and above this world. Shakuntala feels she definitely isn't above this world, though she has had some intense spiritual experiences. Her associations to the daughter who was run over are that she is a sickly girl whom Kumar is concerned about, and she is not an overly good-looking girl as yet. Shakuntala feels that this daughter is overly in love with Kumar, and has many compulsive, cleaning rituals around the house, which Shakuntala feels might be due to guilt.

There was no time to get further associations. However, it appeared that Shakuntala was still struggling with her own intense love for Kumar, which the dream strongly implied had unconscious incestuous roots — the daughter-father relationship probably standing for Shakuntala's with her own father, with Veena and Shakuntala's mother being interchangeable. I did not interpret this at this point in the therapy.

At the same time, Shakuntala decided to burn one of her bridges. She had an ardent Christian suitor with an excellent position, whose marriage offer she now rejected. Both of her parents were against this marriage because he came from another community and religion with very different traditions. What is highly revealing is her own internalized attitude of a profound obligation to preserve and pass on the traditions and customs of her own community through marriage and children — thus fulfilling a basic thrust of Indian society and culture — and not to hurt her parents by having a love marriage with a person from a different community. Thus, the familial self in a sophisticated urban woman still tends to remain extremely powerful, even in

persons like Shakuntala who are fully exposed to many modernizing influences and are increasingly individualized.

As Shakuntala broke off the relationship with her Christian suitor, the conflict between her relationship with Kumar and an arranged marriage became much more intense. On the one hand, she became more intensely involved with Kumar when Veena and the children visited Veena's family. Even then Kumar had to be extremely circumspect. Little is truly secret in India, especially in households, because of the ever-present eye of the servants.[4] On the other hand, Shakuntala felt more constrained to proceed with the arranged marriage, as her parents were very upset when their son and daughter-in-law did not show them proper respect — their son asking for a set sum for expenses each month during 'the visit' (traditionally, the son either foots the bill or the father volunteers to help out with expenses). Undoubtedly compounding Shakuntala's guilt over hurting her mother were her unconscious incestuous fantasies.

Shakuntala then revealed that six years previously an excellent marriage had been arranged for her. The wedding date had been set after consultation with the family priest and everyone was invited. Somehow, two days before the wedding Shakuntala managed to wriggle out of the arrangements. The priest, however, judged it was important that she be married then, as it was an extremely auspicious time. Two days later she went through the full marriage ceremony, circling the sacred fire seven times, and was married to one of the most important gods in the Hindu pantheon.

Up to this point I have sketched in with various hues and shades the kinds of conflicts Shakuntala was involved in her life. But a psychoanalyst is always listening for another level of psychic reality behind a person's overt conflicts, covertly asserting a significant role in them. Where is the play of the personal idiosyncratic? Where do normal social relationships become leaned against and pushed out of kilter by particular actors in the person's life drama? This becomes even more difficult for a foreign analyst, who is not sensitively attuned to the familiar in a society so different from his own, to assess.

For over three months I listened empathically to Shakuntala, trying to relate to her material on her own grounds and within

the framework of her own cultural meanings; simultaneously, I was trying to assess the presence of any unconscious motivation that was covertly influencing her present struggles. One entrée turned out to be her back pains, which considerably worsened when Veena returned with the children after Shakuntala and Kumar had spent a great deal of time together.

During the next session she narrated the following dream: 'A man is standing in water, a vast sea or ocean.' When I asked her to describe the man, he turned out to be a composite of Kumar, her father, and her brother. My way of working with dreams is always to interconnect them to a relevant context in the person's life and/or therapy relationship.[5] Taking the sea or ocean as a symbol of the mother, I interpreted to Shakuntala that her current relationship with Kumar, as previously with her father and her brother, rescued her from the relationship with her depressed mother, while simultaneously restoring a childhood sense of being highly special. However, when she lost the closeness to Kumar, as when Veena returned and her access to Kumar was greatly restricted, she unconsciously regressed into the childhood relationship with her mother, became strongly unconsciously identified with her, and therefore had her back problems increase.

This touched off a number of associations about her family, including a slip of the tongue that confirmed my interpretation of her unconscious identification with her mother. Shakuntala related a tragic tale that had wound itself through her life from birth and was still entwining itself around her fate. Some years before Shakuntala was born, an older and only brother, age two, fell out of a second story window when he was waving goodbye to someone and died. One need not be born in India to assess its effect on Shakuntala's mother. The depressed woman eventually gave birth to Shakuntala. The whole family lavished its attention on the new infant, going beyond even the enormous gratification normally accorded an infant in an Indian family. One and a half years later, a baby brother was born, and her mother's and the others' attention characteristically shifted to the boy.

Shakuntala then seemed to have displaced a major part of her emotional involvement to her father, who was someone she could talk with easily and be close to. He came from a much more sophisticated and educated urban family than her mother, and was more socially and aesthetically oriented. Thus, on one level

Shakuntala identified with his sophisticated, urbane personality, forming an important identification that enabled her later to move into a more modern life-style.[6]

Her mother, on the other hand, was from a rural, landowning family, where *her* mother (Shakuntala's grandmother) was considered to be a holy woman or saint, a woman who had realized God and was still worshipped by many. Shakuntala's mother was much more religious than her father — not unusual in many Indian families — and her mother's sister was, of course, the aunt who was Shakuntala's guru. Thus, in the religious dimension, Shakuntala clearly identified with her mother's side of the family. This side of the family was also psychic. They apparently have had experiences of a twitching in one eye, which always presaged a death in the extended family. Shakuntala reported having occasional clairvoyant dreams, such as a dream of a building collapsing with her father in it, which actually occurred two weeks after the dream. Her father had just one psychic dream in his life: the night before he was taking a major civil service examination that would determine his career, he dreamt of an exam with all of the questions and answers. He did exceedingly well the next day.

Another dream in the following session enabled me to continue my interpretive work. 'I am with my brother in bed. There is something sexual going on, but it's vague. Then I am outside and a man wearing a flesh-coloured shirt comes up to me and is being sexually offensive. Kumar is there, as are other women. This man goes out and badly beats Kumar up. He then gets away in a car with a license plate number IJQQ.'

As she associated to the man and his flesh-coloured shirt, similar in colour to one of her own saris, she realized that the man beating Kumar up was actually part of herself. I then interpreted that her intermittent rages at Kumar, which occurred when he had to withdraw after they were very close together, were an unconscious displacement of infantile rage, when as an infant she was at the centre of everyone's attention and then was suddenly displaced by her brother. Kumar was becoming the image of her mother in the early childhood relationship. Further, her guilt over hurting her mother by not getting married was greatly intensified by her more unconscious guilt over rage at her mother for favouring her brother. Shakuntala responded that she had only recently recognized that she always felt inferior to her

brother when he was around. I related this to a poor self-image because of her mother's favouritism. A few sessions later, she mentioned that for the first time she felt much more comfortable and less inferior around her brother — thus confirming the interpretive work and resolving some of her feelings of inferiority around him.

In an Indian family, the ideal is harmony and good relations with one's siblings. Nevertheless, it is amply clear from Shakuntala's case and others that there may be seething feelings around siblings that unconsciously play a major role in adult relationships.

In the last sessions before I left Bombay, I interpreted further unconscious determinants in her relationship with Kumar: the specialness of the relationship evoked her own early childhood feelings of specialness; and the separations from Kumar (and now the impending one from me) touched upon the anxieties and rages of being displaced by her younger brother. Shakuntala was fully receptive to these interpretations, while also asserting that she still felt closely connected to Kumar through the deceased holy man, whose presence she had recently experienced quite strongly.

In one of these last sessions, Shakuntala associated to her horoscope. Since both Jupiter and Mars are very strong influences on her — the former being favourable to marriage, the latter not — the prediction had always been that she would have an extremely difficult time getting married, and further, that she would almost go crazy. Moreover, she is a *mangal* — someone born under the dominant sign of Mars — and is thus regarded as being possibly disruptive and a risk to a marriage unless married to another *mangal*. Her family paid considerable attention to these astrological predictions, keeping the chart highly secret. If word had leaked out, her chances for a good marriage could be greatly jeopardized. The family's attitudes showed the tremendous involvement of Indians in the magic-cosmic world in trying to gauge and cope with their personal destiny in the major relationships of the life cycle.

I next saw Shakuntala six months later for twelve sessions. Frequently, after a psychoanalyst has had a hiatus in the analytic work — more often than not during a vacation period — the patient strikes the analyst in a fresh way so that subtle, assumed aspects of the patient and the relationship become objectified.

Shakuntala struck me as a very lively, highly emotional and sensuous woman, mildly seductive, who subtly evoked feelings of being special to the extent of sometimes introducing exceptions to the formalities or structures of the analytic situation. Her considerable sensuality seemed in accord with my other Indian patients, colleagues and friends, both female and male, and decidedly greater than among most American patients and friends. While the sensuousness in Indian sculpture and poetry has been repeatedly commented upon, it is obviously a personal quality as well, though varying widely from person to person.

Shakuntala had felt quite disturbed when I had left Bombay, as she had no one to express her feelings and thoughts to about Kumar and the arranged marriage. From her associations, I interpreted that she experienced my going away as an abandonment. As we got past these feelings, Shakuntala related that her aunt had recently written to her that she was wasting her spiritual talents, that she was one of the very few who has the potential to reach the highest spiritual realization, and so she should come and eventually be the spiritual head of the ashram. Shakuntala was visibly upset by the letter. She then related an old incident when the then co-director, a swami, fell at her feet worshipping her and calling her Ram — a major incarnation of Vishnu.

She mentioned in passing that her mantra and deity are different from both her aunt's and mother's. I was curious as to how she arrived at that, and so asked her. She related that when she was sixteen, she went on a pilgrimage with her family to the shrine of a goddess. Upon reaching it in an ecstatic state, she had a profoundly moving experience of the statue of the goddess coming alive. At that point they knew this was her chosen deity. Later, she had another intense spiritual experience when visiting another important shrine of this major goddess in the Himalayas. Shakuntala's choice of this deity, different from those of her mother and aunt, demonstrates the catholicity of religious objects, the freedom of choice, and the profound individuation in Hindu spiritual practices.

Shakuntala experienced considerable problems in developing her spiritual potentials, as she simply lacked discipline in everything. What I had begun to observe as her tendency to dismiss the structures of the psychoanalytic situation, such as the time

and duration of sessions, manifested itself in a number of areas. She pursued painting and poetry passionately for a while, and in spite of being talented then gave them up. Even her meditation was not done systematically, which interfered with her spiritual progress. However, over the intervening months she had formed a small weekly meditation group.

After our initial sessions, she felt less disturbed and reported being able to meditate better. Since the old conflicts around pressures for the arranged marriage and her love relationship with Kumar continued, I decided to delve more deeply into the relationship with her mother. Shakuntala expressed being extremely vulnerable to her mother's unhappy, depressed moods, and feeling even worse when her mother told her that her whole well-being depended on Shakuntala getting married. Her mother's depression had bent the normally close Indian mother-daughter relationship out of shape. I then stressed that her mother would be depressed whether or not Shakuntala married, and by so tying Shakuntala to her whole state of well-being she was having a destructive effect on Shakuntala as well as on their relationship. When Shakuntala later told her mother what I said, she replied, 'Tell Dr Roland I am a mad (crazy) woman'.

One of the surprises in psychoanalytic work, is that one never knows how a patient will respond to an interpretation, especially a meaningful one. Shakuntala came to the next session and for the first time in our work together began seriously to consider developing her career. She related that she had rarely followed anything through, that her position at the college was the first thing she had stuck with, but although enjoying it, she never actually took it very seriously. She now imagined going abroad for a doctorate to develop a career as a college professor; or perhaps she would pursue a career as a film director, like her friend who had left an unhappy marriage. She realized from our sessions together and from talking with an accomplished woman professor at the college that an arranged marriage at this time in her life and development would mean being tied down and suffocated. I nevertheless wondered aloud to her if her image of an arranged marriage wasn't that she would become like her depressed mother. She responded that she had always wanted to be different from her.

I assessed Shakuntala's moves to develop her career and

abandon the idea of an arranged marriage as important steps toward true psychological differentiation from her mother. In an Indian family, the sense of self always includes the other to a much more significant extent than in most American ones, and there is far less separation; but in Shakuntala's family, her mother's depression gave Shakuntala almost no room to breathe without enormous guilt over hurting her.

In psychoanalytic therapy, there is a dramatic unfolding and movement that cannot usually be predicted but makes total sense in hindsight. Shakuntala came to the following session once more talking about the usual ups and downs in her relationship with Kumar. But for the first time I sensed intense feelings of sadness that did not seem related to him. After we discussed further how Shakuntala's mother made her totally responsible for her happiness, I interpreted that her intense sadness — which she acknowledged — resulted from an inner feeling that she had to make a choice between Kumar and her mother, that she could not have them both. The sadness was in effect a further step in the process of differentiating herself from her mother.

She reported a dream in the following session. 'Kumar drops off his youngest son at my flat and takes me in his car to a place with a large lawn and trees. We are about to kiss when a policeman comes over and insists we get out. I said, "This is absurd, Kumar is simply my *mama* (maternal uncle)", but the policeman insists that Kumar return tomorrow at 5 p.m. I am very uneasy.' Her associations to the large lawn and trees were to her house where she grew up. The mama or maternal uncle represents a usual niece-uncle romantic attachment, but she never had such an involvement with her mamas. This was clearly a diversionary tactic in the dream. Five p.m. reminded her of the exact hours of our analytic sessions. To her uneasiness over time, she associated being worried about Veena because Kumar had recently spent a couple of unaccounted hours with Shakuntala.

I suggested to her the clear unconscious equation of Kumar with her father in the dream (the romantic involvement taking place where she grew up), that one important component of her relationship with Kumar is incestuous fantasies around her father, that the policeman (now equated with me) was her conscience, and her fear of her mother was now displaced onto Veena in the triangle. Shakuntala responded by recognizing the feeling of illicit

love and its attraction. I felt at the time, but did not say out loud, that Shakuntala's recent efforts to get me to lecture at her college were in part motivated by wishing to have me as the helpful person — thus offsetting any unconscious images of a projected, punitive conscience.

In hindsight, one can see that as Shakuntala differentiated herself from her mother as a result of our therapeutic work together, incestuous themes around her father and a punitive, maternal superego came to the fore — a not unusual progression in psychoanalytic therapy with women. Earlier, Kumar had unconsciously represented the mother who treated her specially as an infant and then deserted her for her brother; then, he was unconsciously equated with the father and brother whom Shakuntala had used to separate somewhat from her highly depressed mother who was engulfing her; and now Kumar was unconsciously the father-image about whom Shakuntala had incestuous fantasies with the backlash of a punitive, maternal superego. This dream, together with the cases of some other female patients give clear evidence of incestuous fantasies and a punitive maternal conscience in Indian women, thus supporting the universality of the Oedipus complex.

Shakuntala readily accepted my interpretation that the unconscious incestuous tie to her father partially motivated her involvement with Kumar. However, this did not in the least conflict with her view that her relationship with Kumar was also a carry-over from a past life related to the holy man. In the Hindu mode of metonymic thinking,[7] attachments from past lives (*samskaras*), cosmic influences — and we can now easily add unconscious motivations and fantasies from childhood relationships — are all perceived as interrelated with present-day relationships. Psychoanalysis connects the last two (unconscious fantasies from childhood and present-day relationships), whereas Hindu psychology traditionally integrates the first two and the last) attachments from past lives, cosmic influences, and current relationships. Thus, the interpenetration of the past lives, the present biographical past (conscious and unconscious), the cosmic, and present-day relationships can all be readily assumed in Hindu cognition in a person like Shakuntala without the dissonances and clashes characteristic of the Western mind.

In the final sessions before I left Bombay, she continued the

theme of sexuality and incest by first relating a visit with some students to the Rajneesh Ashram in Poona. Sexuality so abounded and the vibrations there made her so uncomfortable that she was unable to meditate. When she then associated to a college girl she was counselling who clearly had incestuous feelings toward her widowed father, I raised the question of Shakuntala's incestuous fantasies towards her own father.

Unfortunately, our month's work had to stop abruptly. In our final session, she responded with considerable anger over my going away from Bombay once again, leaving her hanging. In a last brief meeting, she was feeling much better about our work together and was still trying to formulate plans to develop her career; but she remained highly reluctant to see any of the Bombay psychoanalysts because they might be out of touch with her most salient inner struggles.

Two years later, I returned to Bombay and met Shakuntala for eight sessions over a period of approximately three weeks. She caught me up on her life. Although she still had some desire to take her career more seriously and felt she had grown in her teaching, she had not taken any real steps to further it over the two years I was away. Her parents had left Bombay because of a not unusual mother-in-law/daughter-in-law conflict but, more unusually, with the son siding with his wife. Her parents decided to sell their house in Lucknow and provide for Shakuntala's security by buying her a flat in Bombay. Her aunt, in the meanwhile, had died. Shakuntala had recently visited the ashram, very much wanting to stay, but had returned to Bombay for Kumar. In spite of the ups and downs of this relationships, Shakuntala now accepted its inevitability, and was living with and enjoying it. Although Kumar seemed to have lost a lot of his verve, she felt she had been able to evolve through the relationship — one without strings or conditions, which she had always wanted. (In one of her rare letters, she wrote, 'All relationships are conditional. I only believe in God and myself'.)

She then mentioned that both her father and the man she rented her room from had recently become more involved in astrology. She was apprehensive that if her father delved too deeply into her horoscope, he might figure out from the configurations that she was involved in an affair. This is still another

example of the assumption of a very close correlation between the reading of the planets and everyday relationships.

Although colleagues saw her as a social butterfly, she herself felt highly traditional; in fact, she felt practically married to Kumar. But the one she really felt married to was the god. For the first time, Shakuntala elaborated that girls from her north Indian community are married to this god, or sometimes to trees or pots, as a ritual to offset bad planetary influences, in order to make it easier to get married. Intrinsic to Hindu astrology are ritual practices such as this to offset negative planetary influences or *karma* from past lives, conveying a far more active attempt to change destiny than Westerners frequently assume. Shakuntala had always taken the marriage to the god seriously and as inevitable, and was unwilling to discuss it in any detail.

In the following session she narrated a dream of her father turning into Kumar and vice versa. This continued the theme from two years previously of Kumar being closely associated in her unconscious with the father image. She then associated for the first time that she could always charm and get around her father, as could her brother. She gradually described her father as being quite different from the usual stereotype of the overtly distant, disciplinarian Indian father. Instead, he was a man who was not only deeply and overtly attached to Shakuntala but also set few limits on her. It is this tendency to ignore limits that emerged in our work together. She recognized that her own lack of self-discipline was profoundly related to his being so lenient with her. Although his leniency and overt attachment to Shakuntala were on the unusual side, there seem to be strong currents of father–daughter attachments underlying a more distant, authoritative façade in other cases.

Shakuntala associated that if she had more discipline, she would make much more progress spiritually by meditating for a fixed period every day, even when she did not feel like it. Instead, when she was in the mood, she went into deep meditation, sometimes at one of the temples in Bombay (which contains a statue of her goddess) where she went a few times a month at midnight or in the early hours of the morning. She felt strongly that she would also meditate more if she were in a daily meditation group with a number of people. When she did try to meditate and perform a *puja* in the evening in her flat, inevitably one of

her friends dropped by, interrupting her — showing the informality of social life in India. These friends were far more interested in movies, picnics, and parties than *pujas* and pilgrimages, and apparently knew little of Shakuntala's inner inclinations. The older couple from whom she was renting a room, who participated in her weekly meditation group, thought it unusual for someone as young as her to be so involved in meditation. Veena, interestingly enough, was one of the only persons Shakuntala could share some of her inner experiences with; sometimes they went together to a *bhajan*.

In another session, she spoke of being interviewed by someone conducting a study on psychoanalysis and religion. She was asked to draw different size circles for the two to connote their importance to her. Shakuntala felt strongly that to get the accurate relationship between the two, she must also draw circles of herself in relationship to each of the circles of religion and psychoanalysis. She saw the circle of herself as roughly equal to the circle of psychoanalysis, whereas her own circle was much smaller than that of religion, since her everyday self disappeared once she was in meditation.

In those last sessions, Shakuntala realized that when she was in therapy with me, all kinds of feelings and wishes arose intensely — such as wanting a child with Kumar; but then they were repressed when I left. She felt on the whole in a better position in her life: she accepted the relationship and its limitations with Kumar, liked the college teaching, though still desired to develop her career more, and was progressing in her meditation though still wanted a regular meditation group of like-minded persons. She seemed to have definitely rejected the option of an arranged marriage. She felt she was living too much by her real feelings now to assume the attitudes of most Indian wives, whose sense of duty and wish for closeness to their in-laws and of devotion to their husbands is so strong that they can become out of touch with their real feelings. Shakuntala dealt with my leaving by associating me with someone she knew who frequently visited India but didn't stay. We both come and go. Underneath, I sensed a deeply disturbed reaction. She continued, however, to be adamant against seeing any of the Bombay analysts. Her parting remark to me was, 'Dr Roland, meditation is better than psychoanalysis . . . but best of all is meditation and psychoanalysis!'

Clearly, the intertwinings of traditional and modern themes can be extremely complex and nonlinear in a person like Shakuntala. Just to take her love relationship with Kumar, one must take into account her modernized, semi-autonomous living circumstances in Bombay; aspects of the familial self, by which she was tremendously emotionally involved with Kumar's wife and children; cultural meanings whereby she was convinced they were involved from a past life and astrological readings that predicted she might not ever marry; aspects of the spiritual self such that she experienced the connection with Kumar through a highly venerated, deceased holy man with whom she had had a number of profound spiritual experiences; and transferential issues, in which Kumar at various stages of the therapy unconsciously represented her mother, father, and brother. Even the way Shakuntala assimilated our psychoanalytic work together, by seeing it as quite congruent with astrological readings and other cultural meanings of living out attachments from past lives, indicate that traditional and modernizing influences can blend in Indian cognition as they do not tend to do in Westerners. Like other Indian women, she had no identity struggles whatsoever over asserting a Hindu identity as against a Westernized one.

It is also evident from this case that one of the standard Freudian psychoanalytic positions is not supported. Beginning with Freud, most psychoanalysts have relegated the pursuit of the spiritual self to some kind of unconscious psychopathology or regressive motive. Although Shakuntala was indeed struggling with unconscious conflicts, it would be a gross misreading of this case to dismiss her spiritual experiences and strivings on the basis of these conflicts.

Further, unless the spiritual dimension were fully taken into account in this case and two others, psychoanalytic therapy could not proceed optimally, and might not proceed at all. To the extent that spiritual aspirations are genuine, psychoanalytic therapy will enable the person to become more involved, which occurred with Shakuntala as she partially resolved some of her unconscious conflicts. Further therapy would probably have helped her even more with her meditation by resolving her problems with self-discipline.

There is still another position that I would dispute: that the

person who has realized the spiritual self is totally free of psychopathology, by definition.[8] A more accurate formulation based on this case — perhaps the first one of a seriously practicing religious mystic reported in the psychoanalytic literature — is that both the spiritual dimension and unconscious conflicts and/or developmental deficits can be present, each in their own right, each in varying degrees, and in a highly complex interrelationship. That is, a person can be quite spiritually advanced and still have unconscious conflicts; conversely, a person may be relatively free of psychopathology but may not necessarily be spiritually aware. Shakuntala is the only patient I have ever had who was functioning on the whole quite well socially and in her work to say very simply one time, 'I have experienced God'.

Six months of psychoanalytic therapy is not nearly enough to resolve problems of the nature Shakuntala had, though my impression is that it helped her considerably. Where the psychoanalytic work would lead is something that one never can fully predict. She might well have developed her career further as she became more firmly differentiated from her mother. Where the resolution of the incestuous fantasies around her father would lead is very difficult to say. They obviously not only served in the classical psychoanalytic sense of a young girl's romantic attachment to her father, but also to help her to escape being enveloped by a depressed mother.

Can we generalize from Shakuntala's issues to those of other urban Indian women? The pull to a life devoted to spiritual pursuits, in conflict with various emotional attachments to relationships, is an ancient Indian theme. In Shakuntala's case, however, it assumes a very different guise from that of other Indian women of her age, who are almost all married or widowed. A life totally devoted to spiritual pursuits is sanctioned for only the rare few. Once a woman is married, it would only be sanctioned for those so inclined once their children were married, or they were widowed without children. Otherwise, such a woman could pursue spiritual disciplines at home, as Veena did, as time and duties permitted. Ironically, by spurning the arranged marriage for a love relationship with Kumar, Shakuntala kept open her options to go to the ashram at any time.

Still another twist is that Shakuntala was involved with a man who did share her spiritual interests. This can be a distinct

problem in an arranged marriage, where the partners may have widely discrepant inclinations in this direction; and indeed this very issue did arise with another woman patient.

Much more relevant to other urban Indian women is the issue of individualization versus familial functioning. Although there is today greater familial sanction for individualization, it is also apparent that increased individualization can create a variety of conflicts. In Shakuntala's case, the high degree of individualization in her life and in the intense relationship with Kumar led her to reject an arranged marriage as too limited, thus putting her in conflict with her mother. In other cases, the conflict over individualization emerges between the woman and her in-laws and/or spouse.

What is most striking with Shakuntala, and I suspect highly relevant to other urban Indian women, is that whatever she was experiencing was given meaning within traditional cultural images. My sense is that most modernizing changes connected with education, work, relationships, and such will all be experienced sooner or later within indigenous cultural meanings.

Notes

1. This is not at all to suggest that affairs do not go on elsewhere in India. It is only that they can be managed more easily by a single woman in certain circles in Bombay.
2. Inevitable exceptions among American women have been reported to me by a reader of this manuscript, and it has also been pointed out that this pattern is not infrequent in Western Europe.
3. This was confirmed in a study by N. Seth (1980) in which she interviewed a number of patients undergoing psychoanalysis in Bombay as to their orientation to their psychological problems as well as to any involvement in spiritual practices, and how their analysts related to the latter.
4. Ashis Nandy commented to me after the Emergency that nothing is secret in India because of servants in a household who know almost everything that goes on, as well as bureaucrats in the government. He and others were able to leave India just days before impending arrests when information was leaked to them.

5. I have found from working with dreams that it is extremely difficult to understand the hidden meanings of a dream without connecting the dream to what is going on in current-day relationships — including the therapy relationship (Roland 1971).
6. This identification with a sophisticated, educated father seems to be true of many women reform leaders (personal communication from Geraldine Forbes).
7. Ramanujan (1990) delineates metonymic thinking in which seemingly disparate realms of reality are on a monistic continuum. Thus, a book is not viewed as a symbol of the goddess of learning, Saraswati, but rather as a partial manifestation of her.
8. David Shainberg, a psychoanalyst in New York City who has been greatly involved with Zen Buddhism and with the Indian philosopher, Krishnamurti, voiced this viewpoint at a meeting on 'Eastern Spiritual Disciplines, Psychoanalysis, and Cults', sponsored by the National Psychological Association for Psychoanalysis in March 1978.

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17

Dhannaram's Depression: Psychotherapy with an Indian Villager

B.K. Ramanujam

Farmers' lives change with every variation of water, heat, and air. The fiery *luh* wind brings the dry months, from whose sun and heat none can escape. Releasing the rains that germinate crops and revive growth there follows the moist *biyar*, the refreshing breeze of the early monsoon season. Later the dark cyclones called *andhi* may bring destructive storms and floods from which some will suffer and all must take shelter or perish.

'New wind' is also one of North Indian villagers' commonest metaphors for disruptive social change. Changes are often beneficial when they move gradually through appropriate human networks. When machinery supplements the existing animal and solar energy, villagers can gain through increased production. Irrigation water can benefit all if it is evenly distributed. Similarly, when the network of interpersonal channels for physical and psychological support is in good repair, villagers may be able to cope well even with sudden changes in technology or resources. But when networks are disrupted, or a villager is cut off from them, psychotherapy's help may be needed. Dhannaram was one such villager.

In Indian villagers' way of experiencing themselves, the bodily and dietary humours — phlegm, bile, and wind (corresponding to the physical elements water, fire, and air) — are again the

major variables. Each humour entails a set of mental qualities. When humours are in viable balance and flowing in appropriate channels, the person is in good health; but imbalances, such as a disproportion of phlegm to bile, or mislocations, such as a movement of wind into the mind, bring disease. In social life, too, interpersonal channels carry mobile social goods (like water) from higher to lower, mutual feelings (like heat) among consociates, and disjunctions, negations, or reversals of every kind (like wind, time, and darkness) between others. Therapeutic communication with villagers like Dhannaram requires adapting an alien conceptual technology to the meaningful categories of Indian psychological perception.

Family and Childhood

Dhannaram lived in one of the most backward villages in northern Rajasthan. Twenty-three years old when I met him, he was the third of eight children in a poor farmer's family, himself educated only up to the fourth grade. At the age of twelve, Dhannaram had joined his father and two elder brothers in their unavailing attempts to extract an adequate subsistence for the family from their marginal fields. But by the time Dhannaram was fourteen, his father had entirely stopped agricultural work in response to the wasting death of his youngest daughter. When the girl had fallen ill, the devout father had taken many vows for her recovery. He fasted to prepare himself for divine contact, prayed to Lord Rama, undertook pilgrimages to distant shrines. At his daughter's eventual death, he felt cut off from all beneficial connection with his gods. He gave up his devotions and permanently abandoned all rituals.

From the descriptions relayed to me I infer that Dhannaram's father had suffered what psychiatry calls an acute depression. After emerging from the acute phase he failed to resume any work in the fields: he spent his days sitting in the house or gossiping with other unemployed villagers rather than in trying to feed his children. Members of the family were ashamed to question their head, much less try to dissuade him from his parasitic dependence — the inverse of the nurturance that is expected from a father, a nurturance that a father usually takes pride in providing. Dhannaram's mother remained passive. Dhannaram described those

days as very hard (dry, rough, bitter) for himself and his brothers; they begged help from a local moneylender and kept the family on extremely meagre rations.

The Weavers Cooperative

About two years before my meeting Dhannaram, volunteers from the Indian Institute of Management (IIM) in Ahmedabad had suggested the setting up of cottage industries projects to the people of his impoverished village. The quality of the local land allowed little improvement in agriculture, so the project volunteers proposed that the starving farmers take up handloom weaving, a craft new to them and their agriculturalist caste. Financed by bank loans arranged with the help of the volunteers, raw materials and a loom were purchased. Experts from the National Institute of Design offered training and helped villagers to design and eventually to market their textile products.

Dhannaram learned weaving techniques very quickly from the training group and soon became the project's most efficient producer. Recognizing his superior performance, Dhannaram's brothers and the other, mostly older members came to depend on him as the natural leader of their new Cooperative Society. He led the Society in the quality of his own work and urged higher standards upon the less skillful and less careful weavers. Being good at numbers, too, Dhannaram maintained the Society's accounts. Once when the regular marketing agent was not available, he succeeded in promoting sales for the Society even in the distant city of Delhi. When officials visited the village, he acted as the Society's spokesman and thereby raised his standing still further.

Dhannaram's own earnings increased and soon he was able to pay off his family debt to the moneylender. As the family's principal food-provider he became its *de facto* head, although his living but idle father remained so in name.

But about eight months prior to my contact with the village, IIM project volunteers reported with alarm that Dhannaram seemed to have suddenly lost interest in the weaving cooperative. It was said that he would work only fitfully and then fall into complete apathy. The duration of his apathetic phases gradually increased: he would lie down for days without talking to anyone. He would refuse food at many meals (a gesture of withdrawal

that commonly signals interpersonal distress); then he would eat excessively until he became sick. Following directly on his great productive success, such radical changes in Dhannaram seemed incomprehensible to the volunteers.

A secondary impact of Dhannaram's illness was the loss of initiative on the part of his brothers. Deprived of input from him, they began lazing around as if they, too, had lost their capacities for work. Since the Society's, Dhannaram's, and the family's production fell off, all incomes were reduced. By the time I arrived on the scene the family was again hungry and in debt.

Dhannaram instantly accepted my extraordinary suggestion that for treatment he should accompany me to Ahmedabad, a strange city hundreds of miles away. Villagers are ordinarily very reluctant to take leave of attachments to family and kin, to move away from those who feed them, especially when they are sick. Family members rarely allow a patient to go unaccompanied to a hospital, so I was also greatly surprised that not even his mother raised any objection against Dhannaram's going alone. The failure of Dhannaram's support network at that moment thus seemed complete.

Dhannaram's Account of his Illness

As we began the long trip back to my institution at Ahmedabad, Dhannaram attempted to tell me about the onset of his illness. He could not think of any single precipitating cause. At first he had simply suffered digestive disturbances: he had not been able to eat, and if he ate at all he suffered from diarrhoea. He was also unable to sleep at night. Gradually, he felt so depleted of energy that he could not work. Medications were purchased from several practitioners in the nearby town, but taking these did not bring back his appetite or strength. Then an indigenous healer (*buva*) of the village was consulted; he advised regular bathing and prayers, abstinence from meat and alcohol, and a closely regulated schedule. Dhannaram obeyed all of these instructions for several weeks, but without positive results. He said that he then gave up hope for a cure and resigned himself to his fate, much as his father had done before him, and as his mother and brothers now did with regard to him.

On further reflection, Dhannaram offered an hypothesis as to

the cause of his illness, an interpretation that illustrates several features typical of villagers' life-worlds. One day when he was eleven years old he was driving his goats out to graze. An apparition in the shape of a holy man (*sadhu*) arose and asked him to stop. Dhannaram declared that he was not frightened but filled with a feeling of devotion. The holy man, whom he called by the conventional title 'Maharaj' ('Great King'), told Dhannaram that from then on he was to be under the Maharaj's benevolent influence and protection. He would be spared all troubles if he agreed to just two injunctions: firstly, he will remember the Maharaj every day as his guru, and secondly, he will not tell a lie. (Since truth, like water and other boons, is understood to flow from above, the two injunctions are equivalents in Hindu idiom: the first opens a descending channel and supplies good contents; the second directs that these goods be directed onward to others).

Dhannaram traced the origin of his troubles back to his having disobeyed the second injunction. Some time before the onset of his illness one of his dear friends in the village became involved in a theft. The friend asked Dhannaram to testify before the police to provide an alibi, although Dhannaram knew such testimony to be false. Dhannaram struggled between the conflicting demands of his relationships: he had vowed to his guru not to lie, but the demands of mutual comradeship prevailed and he spoke falsely. He was able to forget the whole episode until talk of his untruthfulness began to spread among his other comrades, the weavers.

When spokesmanship for an Indian group or community is assigned to one person like Dhannaram, it is usually done with the implicit understanding that decisions affecting others will still be made by a sharing of views among all members. But Dhannaram seems to have announced many decisions without input from the other weavers, and some of them were ready to bring him down, to shame him for putting himself above them.

Thus after his false police testimony, some of the same weavers who had previously accepted Dhannaram's urgings and initiatives without objection began to question the honesty of his actions in the Cooperative Society. They started rumours (which he declared to be false) that he might be exploiting his position as a buyer of yarn for them at reduced rates, while showing a higher price in the Society's books. Dhannaram explained these aspersions as due

to his accusers' competitive envy of his rapid rise to wealth and to their resentment that one so young was giving commands to all. Their unwillingness to accept his direction without cavil made him feel unable to continue as their leader.

Dhannaram's and others' confidence in his powers failed more drastically at the time of his wedding, which should have been a celebration of his recent success. Forming a party with thirty of his kinsmen himself — a duty which should have been carried out by his nonfunctioning father — Dhannaram had had to arrange their travel by train to reach the bride's home in another town. Because of the party's indulgence in prolonged (probably alcoholic) revelry (probably at his expense), they arrived at the station after their train had left. Their delay not only caused Dhannaram monetary loss, as he had to purchase new tickets for a later train, but also resulted in the party's reaching the bride's place very late in the night. The bride's family, thinking that the failure of the groom's party to appear on schedule meant that they would now not arrive until morning, had cancelled the customary band concert and formal reception for that evening and had gone to sleep without providing for the guest party's evening food. No more insulting act could be imagined, for a groom is to be worshipped as a god and his party are to be feasted as the most honoured of men.

Angered at the hosts' apparent disregard for his honour and deeply embarrassed before his kinsmen, Dhannaram himself undertook to feed the party of thirty people — an unheard-of action for a bridegroom at his own wedding. Totally exhausted, he went to bed hungry and awoke in a nasty mood on the morning of his wedding day. After the formal ceremonies of the wedding he retired to his allotted room. When a little later, his bride entered the room for the informal wedding games that are customary, he felt a sudden revulsion and asked her not to touch him and to leave at once. He locked the door and lay down with an intense headache.

Suddenly he felt as if he had been thrown out of the bed and flung against the farthest wall. His memory is very vague as to what happened next. He recalls that he lay in a state of semiconsciousness (*bhram*) throughout the following night. During this state the Maharaj appeared and told him that he had failed to follow both of his injunctions. Not only had Dhannaram told a

lie to the police but he had also not remembered his guru when starting for his wedding. These acts of commission and omission meant that he would suffer further difficulties. The Maharaj, however, assured Dhannaram that he would survive his time of troubles and would then again receive his guru's shelter and blessings. (Accordingly, months later, Dhannaram attributed my intervention to the Maharaj's design for his ultimate restoration to grace).

Dhannaram's accounts of this and other visitations by the Maharaj closely resemble plots in several of the oral stories which accompany the *Satyanarayan vrat*, the most popular of Hindu rituals of fasting and worship. In these stories, a god announces prosperity for those who remember him regularly and disaster for those who do not. Listeners are warned that especially when one experiences good fortune, one should not forget one's *dharma* — one's devotions, one's duties, one's network of relationships.

Early in our talks, Dhannaram told me that apart from his digestive problems, lack of interest in communicating with others, and general apathy, he would feel on occasions that his whole body was out of his control (and presumably under the control of a higher power). On one occasion he said that he was walking on the highway near his village, not caring what might happen to him — perhaps an accident — and feeling that life had no meaning. While thus preoccupied, a bus nearly struck him, but he was propelled away from the road as if by an unseen force. He did not feel happy at this miraculous escape. He could not convince his family and the community that he had no control over his behaviour, but began behaving so peculiarly at home that others were forced to consider him insane (*pagal*). Finally, out of sheer desperation he prayed to the Maharaj and requested that he be released from his miseries through death. The Maharaj assured him that the days of his misery were nearly over and that better days of life were in the offing.

At this stage Dhannaram recalled that the house in which his father's family was living was thought to be inauspicious. Whoever owned the house before was said to have met with misfortune. In fact, the merchant who owned the house had let it out rent-free to Dhannaram's family and was himself living in another, rented house. The period of the house's evil was to last for eleven years, of which only four had elapsed. Dhannaram declared that he

would move out of the house with his wife to live in the open near the family well. This he did, despite the many inconveniences.

Apart from the possibility of a house's inauspiciousness (which could also be understood as a covering rationalization by Dhannaram in this instance), abandoning one's house is commonly understood among Hindus as a renunciation (*tyaga*) of one's domestic fires and attachments; such a gesture is normally made when going on pilgrimage, perhaps to atone for some wrongful deed, or when entering the classical life-stage of retirement to the forest, or at death. Dhannaram seems to have had this meaning in mind, for he reported that as soon as he left the house he felt he had made a right choice. At last he felt some peace within himself again. And he perceived that his guru's anger had cooled a little.

Dhannaram's departure from his house occurred at the onset of the warm season, just before the joyous Holi festival, which would be celebrated by worship and communal singing at the village temple of the god Hanuman. He deliberately delayed going to the temple until very late, intending to avoid the crowds and hoping to be able to pray alone in peace. He reached the temple in the early hours of the morning but was surprised to find collective worship still in progress. Many people seemed to be waiting there to welcome him. It was as if he were being readmitted to the communal life and invited again to receive divine blessings.

Shortly afterward, on that same morning Dhannaram was informed of my arrival in the village — a herald of the end of his bad days and of a new beginning.

Dhannaram's Dreams

When we reached Ahmedabad city, I arranged to have Dhannaram employed as a gardener at the B.M. Institute of Mental Health. We met ten times for therapy, mostly talking while walking on the Institute grounds. Despite his limited education, Dhannaram proved to be an articulate participant in his therapy. The natural history of his illness as he told it reveals his interpersonal conflicts, as well as the framework of an Indian villager's cognition. Although not at all unique in his articulations of

symptoms, visions, or other personal religious material, he was the first villager in my experience to volunteer a recounting of his dreams. With very little effort on my part he became aware of deeply felt conflicts as he recounted them. While telling me his dreams, he was himself able to resolve the conflicts within them to some extent, anticipating my interpretations.

In the first dream he narrated, he found himself to be blessed with immense wealth. He travelled all over the country visiting holy shrines. When he finished his travels he felt that he should spend the rest of his life distributing food and clothes among the poor and the destitute. Soon word about his generosity spread and he was feeding thousands daily. One day the Lord of Death (Yamraj) came and told him that his time had come to leave this world, and that he, Yamraj, had come to take him to heaven. Dhannaram refused to go. (The refusal resembles events in puranic stories of Prahlada and of Markandeya, young princes who successfully resisted Death). He told Yamraj that he had assumed responsibility for the care of thousands of people, and that he could not abandon them. Yamraj left, reporting Dhannaram's refusal to the Supreme Lord (Vishnu). Vishnu himself came down to assure Dhannaram that he need not worry about his dependents, that every day Vishnu and Dhannaram would come down together from heaven, feed the people and return to their heavenly abode.

The next dream was more disturbing: he was confronted by five or six very powerful and well-armed people. He was not frightened and told them to leave him alone, as he was not interfering with them. But they informed him that they had come to kill him. They did not know that he possessed magical powers. When they attacked he would become invisible and appear at their rear. After thus toying with them for some time he killed the whole group.

In the third dream, a police officer came to arrest Dhannaram because he had killed so many people. He told the officer that he had killed in self-defence. He said that he was a harmless person if not provoked, but these men had come to kill him. He also warned the officer that he possessed unusual powers and should not be touched. The officer went away and came back with a squad of policemen. Ignoring Dhannaram's warnings, the officer tried to arrest Dhannaram and was immediately killed.

Dhannaram realized that he had committed a serious offence and tried to hide. He hid in a strange house but discovered that it belonged to the officer whom he had killed. The officer's wife was in great distress to hear of her husband's death. Overcome with remorse for his act, Dhannaram assured the wife that from then on she would be his sister and he would be responsible for her welfare.

In the series of dreams which Dhannaram narrated subsequently, the major theme continued to be his aggressiveness. These dreams were not as well organized as the earlier ones. His expressions of murderous aggression towards his family members, and especially toward his mother, disturbed him a great deal. He repeatedly asked me why a peace-loving man such as himself should have so much aggression in him.

As he began to voice these conflicts, Dhannaram's physical energy increased. He began weaving again, taking advantage of his stay in the textile centre of Ahmedabad to learn new patterns, and expending considerable energy in creative activities. He maintained contact with his family through letters. By the time I terminated our sessions he was preparing to go back to his village. My last report of him eight months after his return to the village was that he had resumed the responsibilities that he had held before falling ill.

Interpretations of the Dreams

The nature of his conflicts and his resolution of them are seen both in the dreams and in their sequence.

The first dream could be called an escape into a fantasy of wish-fulfillment. It reverses Dhannaram's actual failures during his illness in almost all areas of daily living. He had in fact stopped working, supporting his family, and communicating with them or with most others. In the dream he presents an idealized self — omnipotent, generous, and compassionate towards the needy. His victory over death is the highest, most impossible of attainments.

As Dhannaram confronts his anxieties, his dreams bring him down to earth. His prowess in the next two dreams is limited to human physical force, plus just a little mysticism. In these episodes there is also a great deal of contradiction, indicating his uncertainty and ambivalence about his powers. No sooner does he annihilate

the police party than he recognizes his criminality and runs to hide. When he hides, he confronts his remorse.

This is the core problem: Dhannaram's aggressive impulses (excessive heat and wind in humoral terms; widely connected but alienated) to dominate others (full of phlegm; to rise to the source of the water channel) are mixed with a feeling of his vulnerability (openness, a concomitant of heat again) to powerful superior and collateral forces. During his adolescent years he attempted to defend against his own aggressiveness by accommodating himself to others' needs, and by taking greater responsibility than was called for. Thus up to a point he had channelled and controlled (cooled) his impulses appropriately.

Only when he became a successful leader did he begin to assert himself openly and fully; but then, having exceeded (by an excess of wind) what he felt to be a safe limit, he felt afraid of his own and others' impulses and began withdrawing (cooling). The last few dreams, in which he finds himself killing, maiming, and destroying others, clearly illustrate this phenomenon. When describing these dreams he experienced extreme discomfort and would repeatedly ask me why he should have such bad dreams. The most traumatic episode was when he told me that he felt like killing his mother. After this catharsis (an expulsion of wind and a transfer of the evil to me) the sense of discomfort gradually diminished.

Conclusions

While Dhannaram's struggles and conflicts are particular to his life history, they also represent issues that commonly occur when Indian village youth must cope with social change. His perception of the conflicts and their means of resolution seem typically and perhaps uniquely Hindu.

Roland emphasizes that the development of a healthy Indian sense of self requires an ambience of 'symbiotic reciprocity'. By this he means a 'strong mutual caring for and depending on, . . . heightened giving and asking in an emotional atmosphere of affection and warmth, where emotional connectedness is always central and where there are open ego boundaries . . .' Dhannaram did not experience such connectedness with the most significant person, the nurturant father, who was unavailable in

Dhannaram's life when he was most needed. Thrust upward in a topless network before his teens, Dhannaram must have felt deprivation and abandonment along with a frustration and rage (wind and heat unmodified by benevolent moisture) with which he could deal only by repression (containment of the heat) and reaction-formation (an inner, cool and windy inversion of his outer relations). He became a competent adult mainly through the omnipotent but severe guidance and sustenance given by a fantasied surrogate father.

When weaving reversed the patriarchal flow of previous village channels, offering young people new roles of leadership, Dhannaram's aggressive impulses reemerged. But the anomaly of his own premature dominance and his increased vulnerability to conflicting demands precipitated a personal crisis. Cut off even from the fantasied patron who had given him guidance and sustenance, and therefore totally unable to continue guiding and sustaining his followers, Dhannaram fell socially and personally ill.

It is generally thought that Hindu villagers are not suitable candidates for individual psychotherapy, since like Dhannaram, they define their problems as objective and external-relational rather than as subjective and characterological; since like him they seek authoritatively imposed, rather than personally achieved, personally responsible solutions; and since, again like Dhannaram, they speak of their problems in a religious or mythic, rather than in a secular, ideographic idiom. My therapeutic work with Dhannaram began auspiciously by reopening a vital channel from superior authority and by disconnecting him temporarily from the channels, which he could not fill linking him to his peers and dependents. Our work was continued by my willingness to accept his output of religious constructs as interpersonal fantasies; and it was concluded successfully by our dissolving through abreaction and interpretation the guilt with which his channels to others had been blocked.

If Dhannaram's crisis was thus in several ways typically Indian, his emergence from it also made use of typically Indian means. Defining personalities as parts of networks of flowing channels requires extensive externalizations and interpersonalizations of the psyche as well as what Alan Roland (n.d.), using a Western definition of personality, perceives as 'profound internalizations' of Indian myths, attitudes, and social traditions. For mutual

communication between such conceptions of personality, adaptations will be needed on both sides.

Addendum

I am encouraged by finding that the literature of psychotherapy is already not without parallels to some of the Indian phenomena reported above.

Thus Kohut in *The Restoration of the Self* (1977: 46) writes, referring to people facing dangerous and difficult tasks:

> I found that prophetic dreams and even hallucinatory experiences during waking hours could occur in individuals who are clearly not psychotic. I concluded that the ability to create, in extreme situations, the fantasy of being supported by a God-like omnipotent figure should be evaluated as belonging to the assets of a healthy psychological organisations.

Afterword

Psychoanalysis and Hinduism: Thinking Through Each Other

Jeffrey J. Kripal

> In the world of cultural psychology transcendence and self-transformation are possible but only through a dialectical process of moving from one intentional world into the next, or by changing one intentional world into another. . . . 'Thinking through others' is, in its totality, an act of criticism and liberation, as well as of discovery.[1]

Introduction: Towards an Ontological Polytheism

In an eloquent series of essays, anthropologist Richard Shweder has called for a 'cultural psychology' whose central task is that of 'thinking through others'. For Shweder, this 'thinking through others' is an essentially hermeneutical act that sets out to make sense of a postmodern world in which 'positivism and monotheism are dead' and 'polytheism is alive and well'.[2] By polytheism Shweder means 'ontological polytheism', that is, a radical philosophical stance in which 'realism and rationality are compatible with the idea of multiple worlds'.[3] Such a polytheistic relativism makes possible the radical vocation of the anthropologist who is called to go 'to some far away place' where he can 'honor and "take literally" (as a matter of belief) those alien reality-posits in order to discover other realities hidden within the self, waiting to be drawn out into consciousness'.[4] Thinking through others thus leads to a kind of postmodern religious experience in which transformation and

transcendence are discovered not within a particular tradition or culture but *between* at least two: 'For if there is no reality without metaphysics, and if each reality-testing metaphysics (that is, each culture or tradition) is but a partial representation of the multiplicity of the objective world, it becomes possible to transcend tradition by showing how each tradition lights some plane of reality but not all of it.'[5] In such an act of transcendence, tradition (whether conceived as 'culture' or 'religion') is both denied and affirmed at the same time. As the exclusivistic bearer of truth and reality, it must be denied, for the postmodern anthropologist knows of many other worlds and many other truths that render any one tradition's claims at possessing *the* truth unlikely at best. But as one example of the ways human consciousness can be constructed, ordered and represented, each reality-posit must also be respected as a possible world of experience. Only by constantly moving from one such partial world to another can the stunning multiplicity of the world be gradually revealed to the human knower. Consequently, polytheism's 'doctrine is the relativistic idea of multiple objective worlds, and its commandment is participation in the never-ending process of overcoming partial views'.[6]

Except for a poetic essay on Gananath Obeyesekere,[7] Shweder does not dwell at any length on psychoanalytic approaches to South Asia in this collection of essays. Nevertheless, his hermeneutical vision of 'thinking through others' and the almost Hindu 'ontological polytheism' that founds it can throw considerable light on the past history and, I hope, the future of psychoanalytic studies of Hinduism. Using Shweder's model of 'thinking through others', then, it is my dual desire here both to say something about the past of this discourse as it has been represented, however sketchily, by this historical reader and to call for a more dialogical future in which these two worlds can begin to 'think through each other' in the minds of culturally sophisticated psychoanalytic thinkers. Shweder envisions four stages in the process of thinking through an other: (1) thinking by means of the other; (2) getting the other straight; (3) deconstructing and going beyond the other; and (4) witnessing in the context of engagement with the other.[8] I order my concluding reflections after this four-fold model.

Thinking by Means of the Other: Hinduism as Exemplum

Thinking by means of the other refers to that process of choosing to study a particular cultural tradition because it seems especially well-suited to answer the kinds of questions one's own existential and cultural places have asked of one. Here we recognize the other 'as a specialist or expert on some aspect of human experience, whose reflective consciousness and system of representations and discourse can be used to reveal hidden dimensions of our selves'.[9] The more we are able to enter into such intentional worlds, the more these representations 'come to seem like sophisticated expressions of repressed, dormant, and potentially creative and transformative aspects of our own psyche pushed off by our intentional world to some mental fringe'.[10] Thinking by means of the other, then, is a process animated by an often unspoken desire to bring to consciousness something which is vaguely sensed but underdeveloped due to the limitations imposed on consciousness by one's own cultural system of symbols and practices.

If the thinker possesses adequate imaginative, intellectual, and emotional powers, the 'awakenings' induced by such an adventure can produce sudden seismic shifts in consciousness that shake the stable world of the thinker and ultimately transform it into something more uncertain, dangerous, and fantastic. Thus the great French Islamicist, Louis Massignon, could claim that through 'a distortion . . . of Space *and* Time'[11] he had actually communed with the subject of his doctoral dissertation, the tenth-century Sufi mystic al-Hallaj;[12] the historian of religions, Mircea Eliade, could write about 'camouflaging' the mystical dimensions of his doctoral researches on yoga in a novella;[13] and Gershom Scholem, the father of modern Kabbalah studies, could claim that 'true philology can have a genuine mystical function'[14] and describe his life's researches as a continual search through that 'misty wall of history' for 'a true communication from the mountain, of that most invisible smallest fluctuation of history which causes truth to break forth from the illusion of development'.[15] Each of these scholars used the other — as saint, as ritual, or as language — to awaken something sleeping in his own psycho-religious world.

Of course, none of our authors featured here venture this far

into that liminal realm where method has become experience and experience has become method, but many of them do indeed see India and Hinduism as ideal places to look for psychoanalytic *exempla*. Hence Bose can write that 'India's ancient learned men had a genius for introspective meditation',[16] and that 'the desire to be a female is more easily unearthed in Indian male patients than in European';[17] Doniger can marvel at the manner in which the latent becomes the manifest in Hindu mythology; Kurtz can note that Hindu society now stands 'second to none as a generative locus of scholarship in the field of psychological anthropology';[18] Roland can write about the extraordinary sensuality of Indians; Collins and Desai can approach India as a culture with unusual experience in reflecting on the nature of the human self; and Masson can describe India as one of the best places to look for instructive combinations of sexuality, mysticism, and asceticism. Kakar employs the same approach when he uses the case of Pran as a way to highlight or even 'cartoon' the maternal enthrallment that he believes functions as both 'the hegemonic narrative of the Hindu family drama' and 'the cornerstone in the architecture of the male self'.[19]

But perhaps Kakar has best captured India as *exemplum* in the concluding lines of his now classic *Inner World*. There he both gently criticized Indian society for its psychic 'overdevelopments' and proposed to use those same over-developments as potent sources of insight and knowledge for a new, more holistic anthropology: 'Like many other cultures which have overdeveloped only a part of man's nature, Hindu culture too may be caught up in contradictions and dead ends. This would be a great loss since the many insights to be gleaned from the nature of traditional Hindu childhood and society are of vital importance for mankind's radical need for a holistic approach to man's nature.'[20]

Of course, such an *exemplum*-approach is not restricted to Indological endeavours, and India is not the only great psychological case study. William James, for example, had something very similar in mind when he set out to study human nature with and through 'the scalpel and the microscope' of some of its most extreme *exempla*, the mystics and saints of Christianity. Such a path through the visions, psychological sufferings, and moral heights of the Christian saints isolated for James 'special factors of the mental life' in a dramatic way that enabled him 'to inspect

them unmasked by their more usual surroundings'.[21] Here, as in India, were striking *exempla* of human consciousness that had not been pushed aside 'into some mental fringe', as Shweder might say.

Getting the Other Straight: The Place of Indology, Anthropology, and the History of Religions in the Psychoanalytic Study of Hinduism

Thinking through others also involves 'getting the other straight', that is, a disciplined effort both to understand the other world in terms of its own practices, languages, and symbols and to see its internal logic, rationality, and aesthetic beauty. Certainly, Freud, handicapped by what Hartnack has called his European hegemonic attitudes, failed here (although, as Parsons has shown, Freud was much more sympathetic to mystical forms of religious experience — that 'ultimate in superhuman understanding'[22] — than we have previously imagined). So too did many of his early and later disciples, such as Owen Berkeley-Hill and Claud Dangar Daly, who tended to use psychoanalysis as a colonial instrument for 'retooling Indians into a prescribed version of the nineteenth-century European'.[23] But much has changed since the early part of this century, the colonial condition is now the post-colonial condition, and the disciplines of Indology, anthropology, and the history of religions have helped immeasurably in supplying psychoanalytic thinkers with a more solid base of information, cultural detail, and linguistic precision.

Many of the present essays bear out this 'getting the other straight', as most of the authors represented here are either South Asians themselves or have been trained in intellectual disciplines that make South Asia a special object of study. Beyond cultural identity or professional training, however, there is something deeper at work here, for what we see in so many of these essays — from Bose's early and pioneering reflections on the Indian oedipal wish to the work of Ramanujan, Obeyesekere, Roland, and Kurtz — is a desire to refashion psychoanalysis itself in the light of Indian culture.

Ramanujan's classic essay on 'the Indian Oedipus' posits different directions of desire and aggression in the Indian complex while preserving a universal structure and the basic psychoanalytic

insight that child-rearing practices and the 'family romance' set up predictable intrapsychic dynamics in the psyche. Obeyesekere extends and deepens this critique by demonstrating how the emotional relationships of the Indian family — defined by the two features of the erotic-nurturant bond of mother and son and the patripotestal authority of the father — work with the larger social and economic forces of the extended family, caste, and religious values to construct a very different oedipal drama and, consequently, a very different experience of self; hence an imaginary 'Freud in Delhi' encounters a different 'normal' resolution of the oedipal crisis in the son's identification with the mother and his submission to the father. In another context and discipline, Roland writes of a 'familial self', which differs considerably from the western individual in both its dependency needs and its capacity for intimacy, and artfully manoeuvers through analytic sessions with Shakuntala, constantly adjusting to the cultural and psychological differences that confront him along the way. Extending Roland's work, Kurtz criticizes earlier theorists with the conviction that traditional psychoanalytic theory has been too bound up with Western individualism to take seriously the centrality of the group in the construction of Hindu forms of consciousness and self; in short, psychoanalysis must stop judging Indian culture by its own western developmental assumptions and admit that India possesses its own 'culturally distinctive psychological structures with their own pattern of normalcy and their own line of development'.[24]

Deconstructing and Going Beyond the Other: Psychoanalysis as Hermeneutics of Suspicion

But any 'thinking through others' must at some point emphasize the 'through' of that phrase and think through and beyond the other. Shweder explains:

> It is the sense of thinking one's way out of or beyond the other. It is the sense of passing through the other or intellectually transforming him or her or it into something else — perhaps its negation — by revealing what the life and intentional world of the other has dogmatically hidden away, namely, its own incompleteness.[25]

Here is where psychoanalysis proper begins, and here is where

the potential for cross-cultural misunderstanding, rejection, and even scandal becomes the greatest. For, as Kakar makes clear in the Foreword to the present volume, psychoanalysis is the iconoclastic method *par excellence*. Its conclusions are often subversive to social standards and its passion for ignoring convention and speaking shocking truths often extreme. It is a radical 'hermeneutics of suspicion' that operates out of the assumption that dreams, myths, rituals, and visions contain meanings that are not readily available on the surface; consequently, it is a method that 'prevents us . . . from simply asking members of the culture what they think the symbol means'.[26]

And how could it be any different? Freud, after all, believed that censorship, although rooted in the needs of civilization and society, was also something *internal* to the human psyche, that *the human mind censors itself*. It is the task of the analyst, then, to read mental phenomena as half-appearances whose full meanings must be deciphered and read out of the unconscious and the body from which they always arise. And this, of course, is an essentially subversive practice, for it sets for itself the task of denying the social censor that constructed the mind's language, values, and categories in the first place. Little wonder, then, that Hindus sometimes find the conclusions of psychoanalysis so offensive to their own self-perceptions and cultural understandings; given the psychoanalytic attempt to crack the codes of the social and intra-psychic censors and its explicit desire to reveal secrets and uncover hidden truths, it would be very surprising indeed if they reacted in any other way. In short, *psychoanalysis is a method that expects to be rejected*.

Psychoanalysis, then, goes well beyond the anthropologist's field study and the Sanskritist's text and the historian of religions' phenomenological study to answer questions that no interview, text, or phenomenological study is willing to ask, much less answer. Hence Bose can discuss how a male European patient's sexual impairment and his 'flight to homosexuality and spirituality'[27] are linked to his desire to be a woman; Carstairs can trace the ambivalent nature of the Mother-Goddess back to Indian mothering practices; Goldman can insist on the 'this-life' childhood origins of 'past-life' memories; Courtright can see castration themes in the decapitation of Ganesa and his broken tusk; Kurtz can trace Hindu spirituality's linking of detachment

and the attainment of unity back to the male child's renunciation of his exclusive possession of the mother for a sense of belonging and immersion in the larger group; Ramanujam can read a villager's vision of a *sadhu* as a psychic replacement for a lost father-figure; Roland can detect unconscious incestuous fantasies in the dreams of a Westernized urban woman; Nandy can read Rammohun Roy's paternal Brahmoism and its reforming concerns to deny traditional Indian notions of womanhood as an elaborate psycho-sociological process issuing, at least partly, out of the dynamics of his own nuclear family experience and his dual desire to overthrow the 'goddess' of his own mother and to install the 'god' of his father in her place; and Caldwell can isolate homosexual fellatio themes in the tongue of a goddess worn by a male ritual actor in Kerala.

This theoretical courage of psychoanalysis, this audacity bordering on *hubris*, is both the tradition's greatest strength and its greatest weakness: its greatest strength because, as a 'critical, subversive presence',[28] it has the potential to push the thinker into new, if sometimes terrifying, frontiers of human experience, political awareness, and consciousness; its greatest weakness because in its zeal to explore new regions and new questions the method inevitably makes mistakes, goes too far, and wanders into the dead-ends of its own reified categories. It is a tool, then, not an absolute truth, a road for the brave, not a destination for the certain.

Perhaps this dual nature of psychoanalysis as both promise and peril, as both radical insight and dangerous excess, can best be summed up by one of William Blake's 'Proverbs of Hell': 'The road of excess', he wrote in brilliant blue ink, 'leads to the palace of wisdom'.[29] Risk, it seems, even the risk of damnation, is an essential component of such a path.

Witnessing in the Context of Engagement with the Other: The Politics and Ontology of Psychoanalysis

After having chosen one's other as specialist, gotten the other straight in both detail and generality, and thought through — and beyond — the other's inevitably limited world, one finally arrives at that point where one must bend one's perspective back on itself and witness to that 'subjectivity in-between' that one

has become. The eye must now eye itself. This, according to Shweder, is 'a process of portraying one's own self as part of the process of representing the other, thereby encouraging an open-ended self-reflexive dialogic turn of mind'.[30]

Many of our authors model this fourth step, if in very different ways. For example, Hartnack's piece on the colonial context of early psychoanalysis in India and Freud's failure to understand the 'Vishnu on his desk' demonstrate the political dimensions of psychological speculations and the inevitable misunderstandings that arise whenever one culture tries (or does not try) to understand another. By doing so, Hartnack witnesses to the politics of psychoanalysis and asks troubling questions about both the history of the discipline and its relationship to Hinduism.

As if answering Hartnack's critique and making up for the sins of the fathers, Roland models a hitherto rare self-reflexivity in his work with Shakuntala, continuously refashioning his categories in the process and concluding at the end of his sessions that certain psychoanalytic certitudes now need to be rejected: 'the pursuit of the spiritual self', for example, cannot be so easily relegated to 'some kind of psychopathology or regressive motive'.[31] Finally, Kakar's experiences with Ramnath and Pran leads him to witness to a position in between relativism and universalism, in which certain kinds of westerners and certain kinds of Indians share a very similar 'psychological modernity' in the culturally specific ways they have learned to experience the world through an inner psyche or mind. For Kakar, there are certainly 'cultural particularities of the self', but they should not lead us to exaggerate differences and abandon the cross-cultural, normative claims of psychoanalysis that make it such a powerful hermeneutical tool.

Deeper than colonial politics or the art of the cross-cultural analytic session, however, there are ontological issues that must inevitably come to the fore as one begins to realize that psychoanalytic categories presume an all-encompassing metaphysical vision of things that tends to limit the range of human and religious possibilities to the hard boundaries of its own mechanical metaphors and positivistic assumptions. Hence Roland can stress the importance of the Hindu's 'magic-cosmic world',[32] and Kakar can note that 'much of the mutual misunderstanding between psycho-analysis and the yogas can be attributed to their different "visions of reality"'.[33] In an entirely different context,

Greenberg and Mitchell addressed this same issue by discussing the fields, relations, and energies of Harry Stack Sullivan's interpersonal psychology in terms of a new physics:

> Sullivan's concept of energy differs from Freud's as contemporary physics differs from Newtonian physics. For Newton, whose weltanschauung informed the vision of Freud and all other nineteenth-century scientists, the world is constituted by matter and force; energy acts upon matter, moving preexisting structures. Thus, for Freud the psychic apparatus is distinguishable from the energy (the drives) which propels it into motion. Within contemporary physics, on the other hand, matter and force are interchangeable: matter *is* energy. For Sullivan, as for Whitehead, the mind is a temporal phenomenon, energy transforming itself through time.[34]

One does not have to accept Sullivan's system of categories to recognize that such an ontological critique could be easily applied to psychoanalysis from realms other than quantum physics, particularly from those various Hindu symbolic and philosophical systems in which, as Sullivan once put it referring to his own psychology, 'the ultimate reality in the universe is energy'.[35] Clearly, such a critique was a major component of Bose's work, which continuously returned to traditional Hindu ontological categories (*guṇa*-theory, *samādhi*, *ātmādarśana*, etc.) in an attempt to incorporate or encompass — in classical Hindu fashion — psychoanalytic categories within a Hindu worldview that was at once newly conceived and traditionally ancient.[36]

Certainly there are all sorts of promising developments along similar lines in the comparative study of mysticism,[37] where numerous scholars are beginning to use psychoanalytic insights not as ontological clubs to beat the mystical traditions into reductionistic submission but as respectful exploratory probes into the psychological and phenomenological structures of these other worlds. Hence Elliot Wolfson can use the insights of the French feminist philosopher and psychoanalyst Luce Irigaray to peer through 'the speculum that shines' and ponder the homoerotic structure or 'phallic gaze' of medieval Jewish Kabbalah and its mystical *sefirot*;[38] Michel de Certeau can employ the 'strange similarities' between Christian mystical traditions and psychoanalysis to attempt his 'dual practice' of using Lacanian theoretical procedures to bring into play 'what the language of the mystics had already

articulated';[39] Richard Webb and Michael Sells can place Lacan[40] and Bion in 'critical dialogue' with Plotinus, John the Scot Erigena, Ibn 'Arabi, Marguerite Porete and Meister Eckhart and, by so doing, illuminate a shared practice of *apophasis* or 'unsaying' in psychoanalytic and mystical discourses;[41] and my own work on Ramakrishna can employ psychoanalytic categories to explore the psycho-sexual complexities of Tantric experience and, at the same time, use Tantric thea-monistic ontology and its *cakra* symbolism to question the legitimacy and necessity of classical psychoanalytic reductionism.[42]

In each of these cases, psychoanalysis has become dialogical, thinking *with* instead of *at* the other. Having chosen its other properly, gotten the other straight, and thought through and beyond the other, psychoanalysis can now bear witness to both a transcendence and a transformation that have taken place not in itself or even in the other but *in between the two*, in a continuous departure from sterile certainty that leads us, in the poetic language of de Certeau, to 'the city become sea'.[43] The profound critical and deconstructive powers of psychoanalysis have not been drowned or dissolved in such a sea, but they have become sufficiently aware of themselves and their own shore-like limitations to adopt what is perhaps in the end the single most striking characteristic of a mind on a dark beach: a profound sense of ontological wonder.

Conclusion: How to Look at a Lotus

Ideally, such a witnessing should go both ways, with psychoanalytic and Hindu intellectuals 'thinking through each other'. It is no exaggeration to say that this mutual thinking through each other has not yet happened, at least on any large scale. Indeed, misunderstanding and outright hostility have been much more common, on both sides.

For their part, Indologists have sometimes been guilty of too quick of a generalization or too easy of a reduction. Examples of such, from Franz Alexander's bizarre description of Buddhist meditation as an attempt to attain 'the pure narcissism of the sperm'[44] to some of Carstairs' theorizing, could be listed for some time. Here psychoanalysis has jumped too quickly to thinking through the other without at first getting it straight.

Little better, though, is Aurobindo's comment, 'on the other side' if you will, that psychoanalysis is 'inconsiderate, awkward, and rudimentary', and that 'one cannot discover the meaning of the lotus by analyzing the secrets of the mud in which it grows'.[45] Although we can certainly appreciate Aurobindo's privileging of the final *telos* of the flower and understand his negative assessment of psychoanalysis as a reaction to the early, grossly reductive stage of psychoanalytic thought (it is also no doubt important to keep in mind the colonial contexts of such an assessment), we must also admit that such a statement virtually deconstructs itself for us. Putting aside for a moment the fact that Indian poetic and religious traditions often see sexual meanings in the shape and nature of the lotus (it *is*, after all, the reproductive organ of the flower),[46] we might also reasonably ask how anyone could hope to understand something as biological as a lotus without first beginning with the larger ecosystem, that is, with 'the secrets of the mud in which it grows'. Put bluntly, there just is no such thing as a mudless lotus. We need not and should not *end* with the mud, but we certainly need to at least *begin* there.

If psychoanalytically inclined thinkers, then, can be accused of concentrating too much on the mud of pathology, the body, and the libidinal drives, mystics such as Aurobindo can be accused of concentrating too much on solipsistic, sexless lotuses growing out of nothing. Both perspectives are half perspectives, partial views that must be transcended by a constant tacking back and forth 'in between'. It is pointless to deny the muddiness of the mud, but it is equally silly to deny the beautiful blooming nature of the blossom. *Both* are aspects of the flower. Only by accepting both, in dialogue and debate, will we be able to see a fuller picture (if never the full picture) of that iconic image and begin to understand its many truths.

Shakuntala, then, had it right when she said: 'Dr Roland, meditation is better than psychoanalysis . . . but best of all is meditation and psychoanalysis!'[47]

Notes

1. Richard Shweder, *Thinking Through Cultures: Expeditions in Cultural Psychology* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991) p. 99.
2. Ibid., p. 68.
3. Ibid., p. 69.
4. Ibid., pp. 68–9.
5. Ibid., p. 69.
6. Ibid., p. 108.
7. 'How to Look at Medusa without Turning to Stone: On Gananath Obeyesekere', in Shweder, 1991, pp. 332–52.
8. Ibid., p. 108.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. Louis Massignon, 'The Transfer of Suffering Through Compassion', in Herbert Mason (ed. and trans.), *Testimonies and Reflections: Essays of Louis Massignon* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989) p. 162.
12. Massignon, 'Visitation of the Stranger: Response to an Inquiry about God', in Mason, *Testimonies and Reflections.*
13. Mircea Eliade, *Ordeal by Labyrinth: Conversations with Claude-Henri Rocquet* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982) p. 49.
14. Quoted in David Biale, *Gershom Scholem: Kabbalah and Counter-History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982) p. 31.
15. Quoted in ibid., p. 32.
16. Quoted in Ashis Nandy, 'The Savage Freud: The First Non-Western Psychoanalyst and the Politics of Secret Selves in Colonial India', in *The Savage Freud: And Other Essays on Possible and Retrievable Selves* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 143.
17. Quoted above, p. 99.
18. Quoted above, p. 186.
19. Quoted above, p. 228.
20. Sudhir Kakar, *The Inner World: A Psycho-analytic Study of Childhood and Society in India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1988) p. 188.
21. William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* (New York: The Modern Library, 1936) p. 23.
22. Quoted above, p. 44.

23. Nandy, 'The Savage Freud', p. 139.
24. Quoted above, p. 194.
25. Shweder, *Thinking Through Other Cultures*, p. 109.
26. Quoted above, p. 281.
27. Quoted above, p. 36.
28. Nandy, 'The Savage Freud', p. 112.
29. William Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, with an Introduction and Commentary by Geoffrey Keynes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985) plate 7.
30. Shweder, *Thinking Through Other Cultures*, p. 110.
31. Quoted above, p. 421.
32. Quoted above, p. 413.
33. Kakar, *The Inner World*, p. 28.
34. Jay R. Greenberg and Stephen A. Mitchell, *Object Relations in Psychoanalytic Theory* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983) p. 91.
35. Ibid., p. 90.
36. See Nandy, 'The Savage Freud'.
37. Perhaps the combination of mysticism and psychoanalytic method among contemporary historians of religions is not accidental, as David Bakan has provocatively suggested the Jewish mystical roots of Freud's thought (*Sigmund Freud and the Jewish Mystical Tradition* [Boston: Beacon Press, 1958]; see Kirschner [cited below] pp. 26–7, for a balanced discussion of the weaknesses and merits of Bakan's thesis), and more recently Suzanne R. Kirschner has traced the 'cultural genealogy' of the psychoanalytic developmental perspective back to biblical understandings of linear history, Neoplatonic models of emanation and return, Christian mystical ideas of the divine *Urgrund* spiralling into the fully actualized Godhead through a series of dialectical contraries, and the 'naturalized supernaturalism' of Romantic thought (*The Religious and Romantic Origins of Psychoanalysis: Individuation and Integration in Post-Freudian Theory* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996]). Bose would certainly be open to such a suggestion, even if he would want to distance himself from the western locus of psychoanalytic religiosity. He, after all, believed that the Indian psychoanalyst was a modern-day version of the ancient Hindu sage, both of whom sought a knowledge of the self (*ātmājñāna*) through an introverted (*antarmukha*) psyche (Nandy, 'The Savage Freud', p. 128).

38. Elliot Wolfson, *Through the Speculum that Shines: Vision and Imagination in Medieval Jewish Mysticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).
39. Michel de Certeau, *The Mystic Fable: Volume One, the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992) pp. 8–9.
40. The persistent presence of Lacan in this new kind of 'mystical psychoanalysis' witnesses again to the structurally homologous natures of psychoanalytic and mystical thought. Had Lacan not once claimed that his own *Ecrits* were 'of the same order' as the 'mystical ejaculations' of the mystics themselves? (see his 'God and the Jouissance of The Woman' in *Feminine Sexuality: Jacques Lacan and the école freudienne*, Juliet Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose (eds), Jacqueline Rose (trans.) [New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1982] p. 147).
41. Richard E. Webb and Michael A. Sells, 'Lacan and Bion: Psychoanalysis and the Mystical Language of "Unsaying"', *Theory and Psychology*, vol. 5, no. 2, pp. 195–215.
42. Jeffrey J. Kripal, *Kali's Child: The Mystical and the Erotic in the Life and Teachings of Ramakrishna* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995 [second edition, 1998]).
43. De Certeau, *The Mystic Fable*, p. 17.
44. Cited in Sudhir Kakar, 'Reflections on Psychoanalysis, Indian Culture and Mysticism', *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, vol. 10, 1982, p. 293.
45. Ibid., p. 291.
46. Sigmund Freud, *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-analysis, Special Edition*, vol. XV, p. 158. 'Do not Forget', Freud writes, 'that blossoms are actually the genitals of plants'.
47. Quoted above, p. 420.

Appendix

Proceedings of the meeting of the Indian Psychoanalytical Society held at the Laboratory of Experimental Psychology, University College of Science, 92 Upper Circular Road, Calcutta, on the 6th May 1931, at 6 p.m. to celebrate the 75th birthday of Prof Sigmund Freud of Vienna.

Present Members

Dr G. Bose — President
Mr G. Bora
Mr H. Maiti
Mr G. Pal
Dr S. Mitra
Dr Sarasilal Sarkar
Lt. Col. Owen Berkeley Hill
Prof J.K. Sarkar
Prof Rangin Halder
Mr M.N. Banerji — Secretary

Associates

Mr M. Ganguly
Mr. M. Samanta
Mr S. Bose
Dr K.B. Mukherji
Dr B.B. Chatterji
Mr A.C. Chatterji
Mr Suhrit Sinha
Mr Amar Mukherji
Mr Shamswarup Jalata

Visitors

Major Mallaya, Rai Bahadur Jaladhar Sen, Mrs Berkeley Hill, Mr T.P. Ghosh and Miss Shamsohagini Ghosh and others.

Resolved (1) that a cable conveying the congratulations of the Society be sent to Prof Freud immediately: The cable was sent the same evening.

(2) That a suitable Indian present be purchased out of the funds raised by the Society and be sent to Prof Freud and that the rest of the contributions be sent to the press of the International Psychoanalytical Association to which the Society is affiliated.

A sub-committee consisting of the President, the Secretary, Prof Rangin Haldar and Dr Mitra was appointed to decide upon and purchase a suitable present for Prof Freud. The sub-committee secured a single piece ivory statuette of Vishnu Ananta Deva from Travancore, South

India. The statuette was prepared on the model of an ancient stone statue under the guidance of Prof Suniti Chatterji of Calcutta, a great authority on Philosophy and Iconography. The ornaments and decorations on the statuette were designed by the renowned artist Mr Jatindra Kumar Sen of Calcutta and executed by the foremost ivory worker of Murshidabad, Bengal, under the personal supervision of the famous Indian art connoisseur and collector Mr Bahadur Sing Singhi at Calcutta. The pedestal was also designed by Mr Jatindra Kumar Sen and carved under the directions of Mr Bahadur Sing Singhi by an Indian Carpenter. The inscription on the silver plate on the pedestal was done by Mr Tarak Nath Roy of Calcutta.

The ivory statuette has been sent to Prof Freud.

Dr Sarasilal Sarkar read his letters from Prof Freud stating that the great old man at the age of 75 took considerable interest in the contributions from workers from distant India.

Dr S. Mitra gave a sketch of the *life* of Prof Freud for the information of the visitors present.

Prof Rangin Chandra Halder paid a glorious tribute to Freud and described his contributions in the domain of Art.

Mr Maiti discussed certain bearings of Freud's work on academic psychology.

Lt. Col. Berkeley Hill spoke about his personal reminiscences of Prof Freud whom he had met at the meeting of the International Psychoanalytical Congress at Berlin.

President Dr G. Bose traced the evolution of Freudian thought from its beginning up to the present time.

Secretary Mr M.N. Banerji recited a Sanskrit poem, composed by Pandit Kalipada Tarkaoharja, Professor of Nyaya Philosophy in the Government Sanskrit College, Calcutta, conveying the Society's greetings to the venerable Professor. Mr Banerji also explained the stanzas and read their English translation prepared by him. (Original and translation are annexed hereto in the appendix).

Resolved that a copy of the poem and its translation be sent to Prof Freud.

Mr Banerji then briefly described the progress of psychoanalytic movement noting also the activities of the different members of the society for the information of the public.

Lastly, the President caused a pencil sketch of Prof Freud to be projected on the wall as a remarkable handiwork of the celebrated artist Mr Jatindra Kumar Sen who produced it as a guess work in 1922 having never seen a photograph of the great scientist. Prof Freud's letter containing his remarks on this sketch was also projected on the screen. This evoked considerable interest.

*Translation of the Sanskrit verses addressed to Prof Sigmund Freud on his seventy-fifth birthday anniversary.**

Om — Obeisance to the Absolute Self

Victory be to this Freud, the great experienced specialist (who is) the new effulgent light of the learned in the ways of the internal organ (mind) — the worthy man who has gradually attained his seventy-fifth year with good deeds (works).

You have discovered the mystries [sic] of the mind conferring great benefits on the world. Proceeding on a novel route for the study of the behaviour of the mind, you have developed a new method of approach. You highly intelligent, have mastered the science of the mystries [sic] of the moving forces in the mind which are inscrutable to the non-self (and) have beautifully thought out a new fixed method of treatment of mental diseases.

Some mental states exist which are unknown to the self of the being. They have been easily brought to the fore with the help of proofs. You have by your knowledge illuminated the highly complex obscure abysses of the mind, which are impenetrable by a needle. Who can attain equality with you? Devine [sic] favours have gone to their maximum limits in you. External diseases (of the body) are easy to treat but the cure of mental disorders is difficult; therefore you, having chalked out a new path, should live eternal years.

The society of the learned located in India, charmed by your extraordinary fame, praises your glory. May you, enjoying pleasures with son, wife and friends, extend your work (research).

* The Indian Psychoanalytical Society presents this to Prof Sigmund Freud, the foremost psychologist on the attainment of his seventy-fifth birthday on the sixth day of the fifth month of the Christian era one thousand nine hundred and thirty-one.

Select Bibliography

We have made every attempt to offer a conceptually and historically balanced Reader that can represent as wide a range of psychoanalytic approaches to Hinduism as possible. Unfortunately (or fortunately), given the sheer immensity and stunning richness of this field, such a task was, from the very beginning, simply impossible, and much that is of great value had to be left out (Alter, Erikson, M. Roy, etc.). Moreover, as the volume goes to press, exceptionally fine work continues to appear (Castillo, Collins, Ewing, etc.). To address this 'problem' we include below a select bibliography, which, although by no means exhaustive, should function more than adequately as a place to begin. For more references specific to particular authors and subjects (e.g., Bose, Freud, Rolland, the Oedipus complex, etc.), one should also consult: (1) the endnotes and bibliographies at the end of each of the present volume's essays, since much that is present there has not been repeated below, and (2) the index. I would like to thank Sarah Caldwell for her generous help with this bibliographic task.

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Index

The following index has been created to aid the reader in locating discussions on particular themes (oedipal complex, mysticism, etc.) and between particular individuals (e.g., Ramanujam on Roland, Obeyesekere on Ramanujan, etc.). As should be obvious to any careful reader, there is a great deal of intertextuality between the volume's essays (i.e., the essayists refer to each other's works), as well as a general, if by no means universal, consensus on select issues (e.g., the nature of the Indian oedipal complex, the importance of the mother in Indian child rearing and hence in Hindu mythology, etc.). The index is designed to highlight these intertextual and consensual qualities of the volume without smoothing over the very real differences and debates that are also represented in its pages. Finally, because most of the essayists have chosen not to use diacritic marks, I have adopted the uniform policy of omitting them as well.

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